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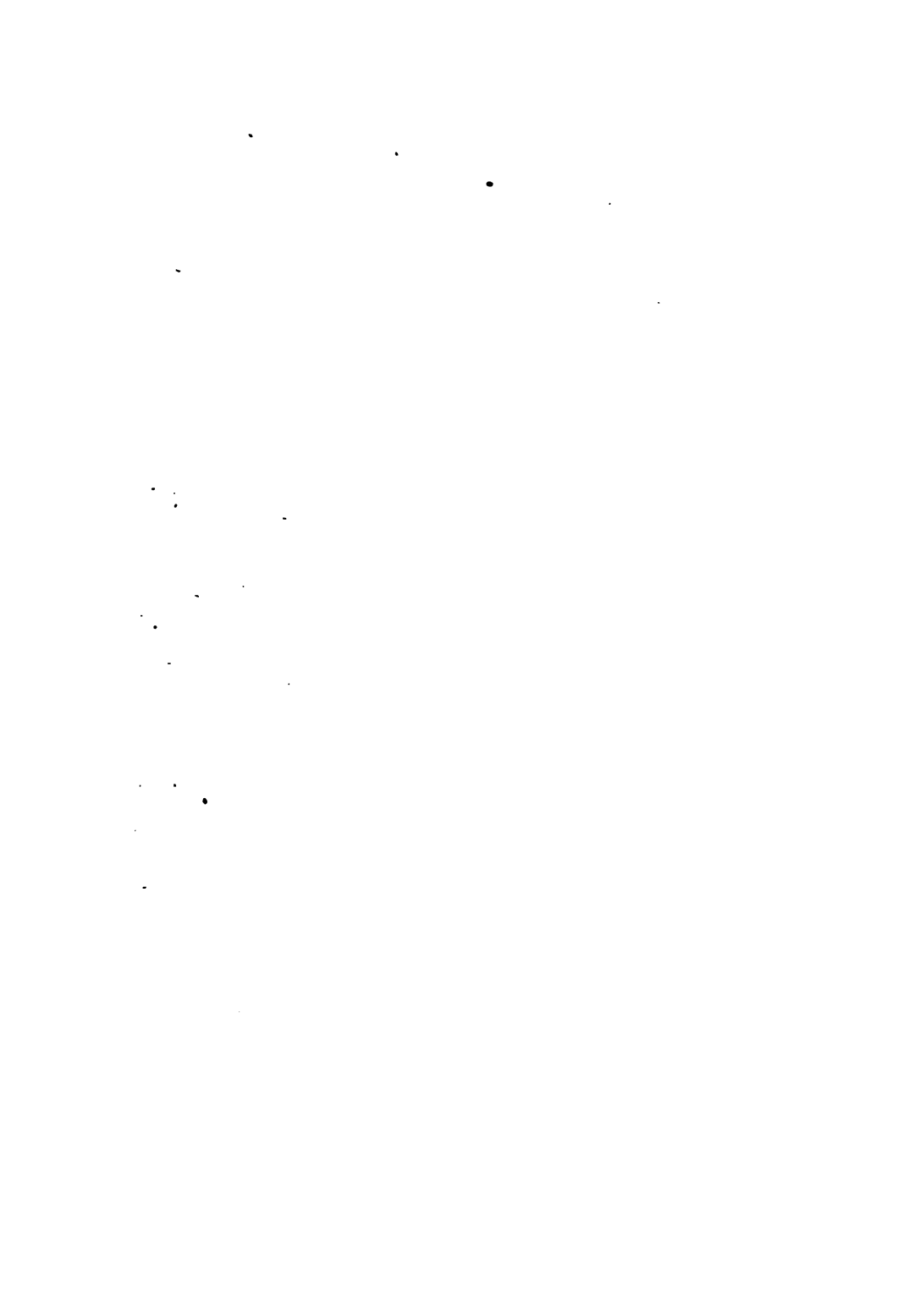


ZRH
Hawks





Auricular Confession.



AURICULAR CONFESSION

IN THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH;

CONSIDERED

In a Series of Letters

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND IN NORTH CAROLINA.

BY

A PROTESTANT EPISCOPALIAN.



NEW-YORK:

GEO. P. PUTNAM, 155 BROADWAY.

M.DCCC.L.

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AURICULAR CONFESSION.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

I cannot wonder at the solicitude you manifest with reference to the condition of ecclesiastical affairs in the diocese of North Carolina. There is indeed, as you state, a marvellous change therein since you and I, with others whom we love, watched with the deepest interest the struggles of the infant Church, and, under the guidance of our dear old father Ravenscroft, labored to the extent of our ability, in restoring the long abandoned temples and sublime ritual of our fathers.

The queries you propound to me, and the subjects on which you do me the honor to ask my opinion, appear, in their consideration, to fall under one or other of the following heads :

1. What is the doctrine of confession and absolution as held by the Church of Rome ? What its legitimate consequences ? What the objections to it ?

2. What is the doctrine as held by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States ?

3. How near an approximation to the Romish doctrine has been made in modern teaching in North Carolina ?

4. How far can certain claims of Episcopal authority and prerogative be sustained under the constitution and canons of our own branch of the Church ?

In proceeding to the discussion of these several particulars, my principal end is to fulfil toward you the obligations created by a friendship existing from our boyhood. I shall endeavor to condense what I have to say into as small a compass as is consistent with perspicuity ; and as my time is not entirely at my command, I must of necessity devote to this work such intervals only as I can snatch from other duties. A compliance with your request to know my opinions will, therefore, I fear, unavoidably subject you to the perusal not merely of one epistle, but of several. I shall be happy if they afford you either interest or satisfaction.

1. What is the doctrine of confession and absolution as held by the Church of Rome, what its legitimate consequences, and what are the objections to it ?

As preliminary to what follows, suffer me to remind you that the true and only question *now* before us relates to the avowed and published creed of a certain portion of our fellow-men, claiming to be, *par excellence*, the Church of Christ ; and as such authoritatively propounding to us what we must believe touching confession and absolution, on peril of our damnation.

We are not now to inquire into the lawfulness or existence of confession itself; we are not now to ask (supposing in earlier times confession of sin did obtain) whether it was general or particular; but we are concerned now simply with the doctrine of confession and absolution *as held by the Church of Rome*.

First, then, what is that doctrine?

In the year 1215, under the popedom of Innocent III., met the Council of Lateran. The 21st canon of this Council enjoined in substance that all the faithful of both sexes, after they came to years of discretion, should *privately* confess their sins to their own priest, at least once a year, and endeavor faithfully to perform the penance enjoined on them; and after this they should come to the sacrament, at least at Easter, unless the priest for some reasonable cause judged it fit for them to abstain for that time. And whoever did not perform this was to be excommunicated, and put out of the Church; and if he died was not to be allowed Christian burial.*

The Council of Trent sat under the pontificate of five Popes, from 1545 to 1563, nearly eighteen years, and was assembled for the express purpose, among other things, of setting forth truly the doctrine of the Church of Rome. It held twenty-five sessions, and its decrees are acknowledged as authoritative by the whole Church of Rome.

In the fourteenth session, it was thus declared:

* See Dupin, vol. ii. p. 95. Of this canon, the Roman writer Fleury remarks, "This is the *first canon*, so far as I know, which imposes the general obligation of sacramental confession."

2. What is the doctrine as held by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States?

3. How near an approximation to the Romish doctrine has been made in modern teaching in North Carolina?

4. How far can certain claims of Episcopal authority and prerogative be sustained under the constitutions of our own branch of the Church?

In proceeding to the discussion of these several particulars, my principal end is to fulfil toward you the obligation created by a friendship existing from our boyhood. I endeavor to condense what I have to say into as small compass as is consistent with perspicuity; and as my time is not entirely at my command, I must of necessity devote to this work such intervals only as I can snatch from my other duties. A compliance with your request to know my opinions will, therefore, I fear, unavoidably subject you to the perusal not merely of one epistle, but of several. I shall be happy if they afford you either interest or satisfaction.

1. What is the doctrine of confession and absolution held by the Church of Rome, what its legitimate consequences, and what are the objections to it?

As preliminary to what follows, suffer me to remind you that the true and only question now before us relates to the avowed and published creed of a certain portion of our fellow-men, claiming to be, *par excellence*, the Church of Christ; and as such authoritative, to which we must believe touching confession, a matter of our damnation.

Canon 6. Whoever shall deny that sacramental confession was instituted by Divine command, or that it is necessary to salvation ; or shall affirm that the practice of secretly confessing to the priest alone, as it has been ever observed by the Catholic Church, and is still observed, is foreign to the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention ; *let him be accursed.*

Canon 7. Whoever shall affirm that in order to obtain forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of penance, it is not necessary by Divine command to confess all and every mortal sin which occurs to the memory after due and diligent premeditation, including secret offences, and those which have been committed against the last two precepts of the decalogue, and those circumstances which change the species of sin ;—but that such confession is only useful for the instruction and consolation of the penitent, and was formerly observed merely as a canonical satisfaction imposed upon him ; or shall affirm that those who labor to confess all their sins wish to leave nothing to be pardoned by the Divine mercy ; or, finally, that it is not lawful to confess venial sins ; *let him be accursed.*

Canon 8. Whoever shall affirm that the confession of every sin according to the custom of the Church, is impossible, and merely a human tradition, which the pious should reject ; or that all Christians, of both sexes, are not bound to observe the same once a year, according to the constitution of the great Council of Lateran ; and therefore that the faithful in Christ are to be persuaded not to confess in Lent ; *let him be accursed.*

This is the teaching of the Church of Rome on the subject of *confession*, taken from her acknowledged standards.

What now is her view of *absolution*? Let us return to the Council of Trent.

Canon 3. Whoever shall affirm that the words of the Lord our Saviour, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," &c., are not to be understood of the power of forgiving and retaining sins in the sacrament of penance, &c.; *let him be accursed.*

Canon 9. Whoever shall affirm that the priest's sacramental absolution is not a *judicial* act, but only a *ministry*, to declare and pronounce that the sins of the party confessing are forgiven, so that he believes himself to be absolved, even though the priest should not absolve seriously, but in jest; *let him be accursed.*

A few passages from the Catechism of the Council of Trent will conclusively show that the clergy of Rome claim to themselves the power of forgiving sins:

"Our sins are forgiven by the absolution of the priest. The voice of the priest, who is legitimately constituted a minister for the remission of sins, is to be heard as that of Christ himself, who said to the lame man, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.'"—p. 239.

"The absolution of the priest, which is expressed in words, seals the remission of sins *which it accomplishes in the soul.*"—p. 240.

"Unlike the authority given to the priests of the old law, to *declare* the leper cleansed from his leprosy, the power with which the priests of the new law are invested is not *simply*

to declare that sins are forgiven, but, as the ministers of God, really to absolve from sin."—p. 242.

"There is no sin however grievous, no crime however enormous, or however frequently repeated, which penance does not remit."—p. 243.

"Without the intervention of penance we cannot obtain, or even hope for pardon."—p. 244.

"The penitent must also submit himself to the judgment of the priest, who is the Vicegerent of God, to enable him to award a punishment proportionate to his guilt."—p. 245.

If to these extracts from the Catechism of Trent, I add the form of the *Confiteor*, and of absolution, I believe we shall have a fair view of what Rome holds and teaches on this subject. The first is as follows:

"I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to thee, father, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my most grievous fault: therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, the blessed Michael the Archangel, the blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and thee, father, to pray to the Lord our God for me."

The form of absolution is this:—"Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis, in nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti." "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The essential part here is, *Ego te absolvo*, I absolve thee. The words, *absolvat te Christus*, may Christ absolve thee, or

absolvat te Deus, may God absolve thee, are held to be invalid by the divines of Rome; because, say they, the priest does not *pray for pardon*, but, on the contrary, *bestows a pardon*, authoritatively and officially. Thus one of the most eminent, Peter Dens, whose writings were selected as the text-book in Theology at Maynooth, furnishes us with the following:—"What is the sense of the sacramental form, *ego te absolvo*, &c.? *Ans.* The sense is this: I judicially bestow on thee the grace of the remission of all thy sins, or grace of itself remissive of all thy sins, as far as is in the power of my ministry. This sense of the form cannot be admitted, *I declare thee absolved*, because it is condemned by the Council of Trent, sess. 14, c. 9."*

From these extracts, it appears to me that we may fairly deduce the following as points affirmed by the Church of Rome on the subject of Confession and Absolution.

1. That sins are to be divided into mortal and venial.
2. That confession of sin is a *sacrament*, instituted by divine command.
3. That this confession must be *auricular*; that is, made secretly to a priest, and may and must include a particular enumeration of all sins of all sorts, with an unreserved exposure and submission of the whole heart to the inspection and guidance of the priest, who has power as God's Vicegerent to absolve and forgive sins; and who in absolution acts *judicially* and not *ministerially*, being infallibly directed in his judgment by the Holy Ghost.

* *Theologia Moralis et Dogmatica*, vol. vi. p. 17. Dublin Edition, 1832.

4. That *such* confession was always the doctrine and usage of the church of Christ.

5. That such confession is *essential to salvation*.

6. That it is to be made for the purpose of obtaining a sacramental absolution of all sins committed *after baptism*.

Having thus ascertained, from the accredited standards of the Church of Rome, what her tenets are, in my next I will examine what are the grounds of objection to them.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

The first position of the Church of Rome is, that sins are to be divided into mortal and venial. If by this, no more were meant than that all sins which man can commit, are not equal in enormity or degree, I know not any intelligent Christian who would refuse his assent to such a proposition. Or, if by venial sins, they intend merely those daily frailties and infirmities to which even good and virtuous men are subject, and against which they habitually watch and strive and pray, I suppose the distinction they have made would be generally recognized. But the Church of Rome, I apprehend, means much more than this. This distinction into mortal and venial forms a necessary part of her *system* of auricular confession, penance and absolution. In her doctrine of penance, she teaches that there is a whole class of sins which she terms *venial*; and the peculiar characteristic of which is, that they may claim God's pardon as of right: such sins as, if all of them were combined, would not be equal to one *mortal* sin. They hold that these venial sins, even if we commit them, cannot put us out of God's

favor; and that by no possibility can any man, on account of *them*, perish eternally.*

This is the Romanist's view of what he calls *venial sins*.

Now to this view there are very grave, not to say conclusive objections; indeed, there is at least one which is conclusive:—*the Scripture teaches no such doctrine concerning any sin, or class of sins*. It makes no distinction between such as *may* and such as *must* be pardoned by our Heavenly Father: for this is in truth the great feature in the Romish distinction between mortal and venial sins. On the contrary, the Bible expressly tells us what, on a contemplation of the Divine nature, mere human reason teaches us could not be otherwise, viz.:—that God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity;” and that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” It shows us, therefore, the condemnation of *all* sin, and the necessity of pardon for all; but not one word can be found intimating that certain sins do not remove us from God's favor and friendship (that is, do not displease Him); and still less that the pardon of any sins may be demanded of God as a matter of right, which they certainly may be if, as Dens says, “*remissio peccati venialis est debita*,” remission of venial sin is due or a debt.

Further: No such distinction as Rome has made between mortal and venial sins, is to be found in the early Christian writers.

* *Quamvis remissio peccati venialis sit ex misericordia Dei, illa tamen, suo modo, debita est homini justo illam petenti: nam peccatum veniale non tollit divinam amicitiam.* Theologia moralis et dogmatica Petri Dens, vol. i. p. 364. Dublin edition. 1832.

Further still: Reason condemns any such distinction. If God be sovereign, He had a right to make laws; laws necessarily imply penalties for their violation; the penalty is not vindictive but vindicative, i. e., intended to uphold the sovereignty of the law-maker; that sovereignty is as much denied by one act of disobedience as by another; hence, every sin is a denial; every sin, therefore, must deserve punishment, *ergo*, no sin can claim pardon "as of right." Sins may indeed deserve the punishment of Heaven in a greater or less degree (we read, that the stripes may be many or few), but we have no authority, that I am aware of, for measuring that degree by the terms "*temporal*" and "*eternal*." I know not where it is written that there is a whole class of sins, venial, or pardonable in their own nature, for which God will punish man, as Rome teaches, with "*temporal chastisement*"* only. And as the right to make the law, involves necessarily the right to make also what penalty *the law-giver pleases*, we can no otherwise know that the penalty is "*temporal chastisement*," than by being expressly told so, *which we nowhere are*.

But in the last place, for I would not weary you with this part of the subject; it does seem to me that, on the showing of the Romanists themselves, sins though differing in degree, do not and cannot differ *in their essential character*; and therefore, except for its mischievous and positively bad effect on men's conduct, the distinction into mortal and venial is unmeaning.

* "Sincere Christian," p. 258.

It is written "the wages of sin is death:"—it is sin indefinitely, and therefore includes *all* sin: now, under the covenants of Christianity, the shedding of the blood of our blessed Saviour is made indispensable to the remission of sin; and it is owing to the death of our Lord, and the mercy of God the Father, and to nothing else, that sin is made pardonable or venial at all. We are also taught, that through the death of Christ all may be pardoned upon certain conditions, and none are pardoned otherwise. We say the conditions are repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the Romanist says the conditions are penance, auricular confession, and absolution by the priest. Take if you please the conditions of the Romanist: is it not obvious even then, that as death is attached to *all* sin, without distinction, that the man who commits any sin, mortal or venial, dies if he neglect the conditions, and that he who fulfils the conditions will die for none, whether mortal or venial; and consequently that in their essential character and nature *as sin*, mortal and venial must be precisely the same? It is proper, I should add, that one class of Roman writers avoid this inevitable conclusion, by boldly affirming that venial sins are pardonable *in their own nature*, and *do not need the atonement of Christ*. This wicked denial of Christ as the sole Saviour of guilty man needs no answer.

I need hardly pause to speak of the effects of such a view of sin upon men's conduct. It is obvious that nothing can be more injurious to a holy life, than the belief, that there is a class of sins which are sure of pardon. This doctrine cannot possibly help poor weak man "in destroy-

ing the whole body of sin ;” but will inevitably lead him on to the commission of what the Romanist calls mortal or deadly sin ; “despising little things,” he will “perish by little :” for these venial sins are precisely those which are of most frequent occurrence, and to which, frail mortals are most prone. May I not add that being *little*, instead of being venial *per se*, they are precisely those which are least excusable ; for obedience was easier ?

When to this we add that, even by the best of the Roman divines, the list of venial sins is left uncertain and undefined, so that there is perpetual risk of passing, without knowledge, from venial to mortal, I trust you will see that our only security is in adhering to the simple teaching of the word of God, that “*all* unrighteousness is sin,” and that “sin [*all* sin] when it is finished bringeth forth *death*.”

The next position is that confession of sin is a *sacrament*, instituted by divine command.

The Latin word *sacramentum*, from which is derived our word sacrament, is used by the Latin writers to signify an oath or obligation of fidelity, such as was administered to soldiers. By the Latin fathers the word is used in an enlarged range of meaning, to signify *any sacred thing* which lies concealed, or not on the surface.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent thus defines it : “A sacrament is a thing, subject to the senses ; and possessing, by divine institution, as well the power of signifying sanctity and righteousness, as of imparting them.”* *Dens*

* *Sacramentum est res sensibus subjecta, quæ ex Dei institutione,*

writes as follows: "It is a sign of a sacred thing, not a naked sign, but one which sanctifies men."*

Protestants, as you are aware, believe that a sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." They also believe that a sacrament consists of two parts, the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace. It would hence seem that the Protestant's view of a sacrament embraces three particulars: 1st. Institution by Christ; 2d, Outward significant symbols or visible signs, and 3d, Grace communicated in the faithful and proper use of the sacrament.

Now the Romanists also admit the first of these. They say that neither had the apostles formerly, nor has the Church now, any power to make sacraments; that Christ alone can institute them. That Christ did institute baptism and the supper of the Lord, is evident enough from Scripture; about these Romanists and Protestants agree; but you will naturally ask where is the evidence *from Scripture* that Christ ever instituted such a sacrament as penance?

It is a singular fact that no Roman writer, as far at least as I have been able to discover, has ever ventured to quote a single passage from Scripture, as *direct* evidence of the institution of penance *as a sacrament*, by our Lord. Its

Sanctitatis et justitiæ tum significandæ, tum efficiendæ vim habet.
Cat. Trent, p. 135.

* Est signum rei sacræ, non nudum, sed ut sanctificans homines.
De Sacramentis in Genere No. 1. Vol. v. Dub. Ed.

claim to this character, as set forth by Romanists themselves, begins, not with Scripture but in *tradition*: nay, some of their own writers expressly deny that all their seven sacraments were instituted by Christ.*

One of their modern divines, Leibermann,† thus attempts to prove that Christ instituted all the seven sacraments of the Church of Rome. He begins with the Council of Trent: "If any one shall say that the sacraments of the new law were not all instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ—let him be accursed." And this dictum of the Council he thus supports: 1. *Scripture*. For this is openly professed by the apostle when writing to the Corinthians. Epist. 1, v. 4.—He says, "Let a man so esteem us as ministers of Christ, and dispensers of the mysteries of God." Can you find in this one syllable to show that our Lord instituted what Rome calls the sacrament of penance? But to proceed with Leibermann. 2. *Tradition*. For it was the constant persuasion of the Church that all the sacraments were (*tradita*) delivered by tradition from Christ, and that nothing respecting their number or substance could be changed. 3. *Reason*; which, when once it understands the nature and definition of a sacrament, acknowledges that no sacrament is ordained without divine appointment.

You will hence perceive that, after all, *tradition* and not the *written word* constitutes the *divine authority* of the sacraments in the view of the Romanist. And they argue thus

* Hugo. Peter Lombard.

† Institutiones, c. 3. De Auctore Sacram, vol. iv. part 1. p. 225.

in support of it. The New Testament, say they, was not written when Baptism and the Eucharist (confessedly sacraments) were instituted; they had consequently no express Scripture warrant in the beginning; *ergo* they rested on tradition. The answer is very obvious—grant that these two sacraments began in tradition; it is very certain that such tradition was soon written and expressly set down in Scripture and received by the whole Church on the written evidence of such tradition: but the alleged Roman tradition on the subject of penance, was neither thus expressly written down in the Scriptures, nor received by the early Church.

But further, it would seem that even according to the Romish view of a sacrament, it is difficult to make one of penance. They require matter and form as part of the sacrament. What is the matter or sign in penance? Baptism has *water*, the Eucharist *bread and wine*, confirmation *chrism*, extreme unction *oil*, &c.; but what is there in penance? No external visible sign or matter; simply the application of a general promise by the mere use of words. Some of them indeed say that the confession and form of absolution constitute the outward and visible sign; but all do not say this. In fact some place the sign in one thing and some in another.*

Our objection therefore to penance as a sacrament is, that we have no evidence either from Scripture or tradition even, that Christ instituted it as a sacrament; and further that, in the absence of a specific outward and visible sign, it wants one of the indispensable elements of a sacrament.

* See *Gerhard, De Penitent. sec. 23.*

The next assertion of the Church of Rome is that Confession must be *auricular* ; that is, made secretly to a priest, and may and must include a particular enumeration of all sins of all sorts, with an unreserved exposure and submission of the whole heart to the inspection and guidance of the priest, who has power, as God's Vicegerent, to absolve and forgive sins ; and who in absolution acts *judicially* and not *ministerially*, being infallibly directed in his judgment by the Holy Ghost.

The consideration of this I must reserve for my next letter.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

We are now to consider *auricular* confession to a priest. The Romanists rest it, first, on *Scripture*,—"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." James v. 16.

This does not establish the doctrine ; because, first, it is not said confess your faults to the *elders* or *presbyters* or *bishops*, but to one another ; secondly, if this passage proves that the people must make auricular confession to the priest, then it is equally conclusive to prove that the priest must make a similar confession to the people ; thirdly, there is not one word here said of a private whispered confession, nor of absolution by a priest, nor by any other person.

But the passage on which Rome mostly relies, and on which alone the Council of Trent seems to rest the cause of auricular confession, is in John xx. 23 :—"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." You will here perceive at once that there is no *direct, explicit* institution of confession to a priest in these words ; it is, therefore, to be

deduced as matter of unavoidable inference, if found at all. Accordingly Bellarmine, and some other doctors of the Romish Church, thus deduce it. Christ, say they, here made the Apostles and all priests judges upon earth; so that without their sentence no man who sins after baptism can be reconciled.

But the priests, who are thus made judges, can give no proper sentence, unless they know all the particulars they are to judge.

They cannot know these otherwise than by the penitent's confession to the priest of each particular sin he has committed.

Ergo, by Christ's law the penitent is bound to confess each particular sin to the priest.

I think this a fair statement of the argument of the Church of Rome.

The basis on which all rests is, that Christ has conferred on the priest *judicial* authority. He is made a judge. Suppose for the present we concede it; the question arises, Of what is he to judge? Is it of the penitent sorrow of the confessing, or of the appropriate measure of punishment for certain sins? Is the judgment to be of the man's state of mind, or of the fit punishment for his sins?

It seems, to me at least, very plain that he can be judge only of the penitent's *state of mind*, for these reasons. First, it is not said *whatever* sins ye remit, &c., but *whose soever* sins ye remit, thus clearly referring it to the moral condition of the person. Our Saviour is not here making a distinction between *two sorts of sins*—one to be remitted, and one to be retained; but between *two sorts of sinners*—one

penitent, and the other impenitent. It is true in Matthew xviii. 18 it is said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind," &c., but it is not whatsoever *sins*. Matthew wrote in Hebrew, and here uses a Hebraism; the words *bind* and *loose* are used in the sense of *obliging* and *dissolving*, according to the customary phraseology of the Jews when they referred to any thing as *lawful* or *unlawful* to be done. They occur in no other of the Gospels, probably because they were all written in Greek. The passage gave the Apostles authority to declare what was obligatory and what was dispensed with in the Jewish law; and thus, by the authority of the Holy Spirit, to declare what was to be retained or omitted in the Christian Church.

But as to this passage, it would be doing injustice to the learning of the Church of Rome to suppose her ignorant of the fact, that in the earlier ages of the Christian Church no one ever dreamed of applying it to auricular confession. She must know that by many it was held to have respect to every individual Christian as much as to a priest. In the preceding verses directions are given to every one how to behave toward an offending brother. He must first admonish him *alone*, next before *two or three witnesses*, then *tell it to the Church*; and if he still continue incorrigible, then let him be unto *thee* no better than a *heathen man or a publican*. Immediately after follows this passage, "*Whatsoever ye shall bind,*" &c.; by which words a power was understood to be given to a Christian to judge concerning any offence committed against him, with an assurance that his judgment, if just, would be confirmed in heaven. That Augustine so understood it is plain. He has a sermon on

this very passage, in which he thus speaks :—"Thou hast begun to deem thy brother no better than a publican ; thou bindest him on earth, but take care that thou bindest him justly ; for divine justice breaks in sunder the bonds that are unjust. When thou hast corrected, and agreed with thy brother, thou hast loosed him on earth ; when thou hast loosed him on earth, he is loosed in heaven."* The passage is one of caution to the Christian, to be sure he is right before he refuses to have Christian fellowship with his brother. Jerome evidently had in his mind no such interpretation of this passage as the Romanists would give. In his comment on Matthew xvi. 19, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind," &c., he thus writes :—"The bishops and priests, misunderstanding this passage, assume to themselves something of the pride of the Pharisees, and think that they have the right to condemn the innocent, and absolve the guilty ; whereas with God, not the sentence of the priest, but the life of the guilty is inquired into."†

* "Cæpisti habere fratrem tuum tanquam publicanum, ligas illum in terra, sed ut juste alliges, vide. Nam injusta vincula dirumpit justitia. Cum autem correxeris et concordaveris cum fratri tuo, soluisti illum in terra. Cum solueris in terra, solutus erit et in cælo." Opera August., vol. 10, p. 87. Editio Lugduni, 1561.

† "Istum locum episcopi et presbyteri non intelligentes, aliquid sibi de Pharisæorum assumunt supercilio, ut vel damnent innocentes, vel solvere se noxios arbitrentur, cum apud Deum, non sententia sacerdotum, sed reorum vita quærat. Hieron, in loco. I cite this passage, without meaning to assert that it is Jerome's ; some of the learned have doubted whether he wrote the commentary on Matthew attributed to him. Romanists however generally receive it as his.

Secondly. Without infinite holiness, no mere man can see sin as God sees it ; without omniscience to perceive all the workings of conscience against the commission of any given sin, all the amount of knowledge which the sinner may possess or want, all the force of temptation, weak or strong, long resisted or not at all opposed ; in short, without the power of infallibly reading the secrets of the heart, no mere mortal can possibly determine what is the suitable penance for any sin. If the priest be God's vicegerent in the matter, acting under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, then it must follow that his punishments will be precisely such in any given case of sin as God himself would inflict. But what ground is there, either in Scripture or reason, for any such pretence of holiness in a Roman priest, or of infallibility founded on omniscience ; or of any given punishment being precisely what God would inflict ? None. If, then, (admitting the priest to be, as he claims, a judge,) he is to judge of the man's penitence merely, of his moral state, what earthly necessity is there for a distinct confession of all his sins *seriatim* ? If in heart-broken contrition he make a general acknowledgment, or confession of sin, and profess a hearty sorrow for it, why is it not as satisfactory evidence of his moral condition as a specific enumeration of his sins would be ? In either case, what other evidence can the priest have but the mere word of the penitent ? The only difference is, that in the one case the priest possesses himself of all the secret acts of the penitent's life, and thus brings him under his power ; and in the other, he does not.

But is he in fact a *judge* at all ?

It is a strange judicatory that is so constituted as to confer judicial functions, and not *secure* to the judge, beyond all peradventure, the right to *compel* submission to his jurisdiction. Grant, if you please, that the Romanist may deduce from John xx. 23 a power in the priest to judge, when a penitent comes before him; he certainly cannot deduce from it that a penitent is *bound* to come to this judicatory, and may not apply for pardon at once to the divine tribunal. He is not authorized, even by Rome, to issue any process which will compel his attendance. Nay, so far from binding him to come, the Romanists themselves say that he cannot, by reason of any words of Christ, be *compelled* to confess his *venial* sins. Then it must follow, we think, that he is not bound to confess his mortal sins; and consequently the priest's claim to be a *judge* falls to the ground, for he is without a certain jurisdiction. For if a man be bound to *repent* of *all* his sins, one of two consequences inevitably results: either repentance may be performed without the intervention of the priest at all; or else, if the priest be necessary, a sinner must repent *before the priest for all*: but, says the Romanist, he may repent of his venial sins, *and not go to the priest*; then going to the priest is not *per se* an *essential, indispensable part of repentance*. If, therefore, it is claimed that any act of repentance does not fall within this last proposition, but forms an exception to it; it is very clear that, as God "hath commanded all men every where to repent," the express declaration of Christ making the alleged exception, must be shown, or all repentance will fall under the general rule which makes priestly intervention not an essential of repentance. We

ask therefore for express declaration requiring, for the penitance of "mortal" sin, the intervention of a priest, an indispensable or essential ingredient. I need not ask what we ask in vain.

But further, when jurisdiction is given among men, it is always by *express grant*: it must be so: no man has or can have a natural right to be a judge, even in things temporal, and his power to exercise judicial functions is consequently never matter of inference. He is regularly appointed judge, with all the rights and powers belonging to his office, clearly defined. Jurisdiction is conferred positively and expressly. Is it not then reasonable to require of the priest something stronger than an exceedingly forced *inference*, to sustain his claim to a priestly judicatory? His subjects of judgment are confessedly beyond mortal law: they are the hidden workings of the human heart: they are the dispensation of punishments, to be meted out with a precision and equity, so pure, so righteous, that an infinitely wise and holy being would have meted out exactly the same: they are claimed to be the acts of God's earthly vicegerent, preserved by the Divine Spirit of truth and righteousness from all possibility of error, for they are to be finally ratified by the great God of heaven and earth, in whom there is no possibility of wrong or mistake!

These are large claims to be made by man. If God has bestowed such awful gifts, we are ready to bow in submission to His appointments, whatever they may be: but before we, as reasonable and accountable beings, can acknowledge the grant from Heaven of such powers to men of like passions and infirmities with ourselves, we ask

something more than an over-strained and illogical inference to sustain them. We ask for that at least, which the wisdom of even weak man has seen to be necessary in securing respect and obedience for judicatories that are of the earth all earthy. We ask for a grant of powers so unequivocal, so express, that a doubt is dishonoring to human reason : we ask that these powers may be so clearly defined, as to save us from the tyranny of judicial caprice : we ask for some security against moral impurity and intellectual unfitness in him who exercises one of Heaven's most awful prerogatives, and sits in the seat of God, as the judge of men's sins and men's souls.

When God shall say to us *expressly*, 'the priests of my Church are the judges of your souls ; and to them I command you to unbosom every secret thought and work of your innermost hearts, and to lay bare before them, every sin, even as they stand naked before my eye ;' then will we believe ; and find in the command alone, all the evidence we wish of priestly power, priestly purity, and priestly wisdom, for the discharge of the duties of God's vicegerents ; and we will obey. But until then ; to him who, as a priest of the Church of Rome, claims these high powers, on no better authority than that of the Council of Trent, and the perversion of the written word of God ; standing "fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," we will say to the impious usurper of the judgment seat of Heaven ;—"Who art THOU that judgest another man's servant ? To his own master he standeth or falleth."

But there is yet more to be said on the claim made to

judicial powers by the priesthood of the Church of Rome: and as it is really the basis of the argument they deduce from John xx. 23, you must permit me to detain you on this point a little longer.

It is one part of the province of a judge to *punish*: from him proceeds authoritatively the sentence which vindicates the violated majesty of the law. Now we ask, if the priest be a judge, why has he not express authority to *punish*? We can find for him in Scripture authority to *declare*, in God's name, God's pardon to the penitent, God's anger against sin, and *His* threatened punishment of it: but not one syllable can be found in the book of God, whereby he delegates to man, be he priest or be he layman, His own high prerogative of inflicting punishment on the spiritual part of man's nature for transgression. "The soul that sinneth it shall *die*." Where is it written that *man* has any power to visit the soul with death? So much as to the impenitent. As to the penitent, I cannot do better than present you with the conclusive argument of Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

"Neither gave He any power to *punish*, but to pardon or not to pardon. If Christ had intended to give the priests a power to impose a punishment according to the quality of every sin; the priest indeed had been the executioner of Divine wrath: but then, because no punishment in this life can be equal to the demerit of a sin which deserves the eternal wrath of God; it is certain the priest is not to punish them by way of vengeance. We do not find any thing in the words of Christ, obliging the priest directly to impose penances on the penitent sinner; he may *voluntarily* submit

himself to them, if he please ; and he *may* do very well, if he do so : but the power of retaining sins gives no power to punish him whether he will or no ; for the power of retaining is rather to be exercised upon the impenitent than upon the penitent. Besides this, the word of [remitting] sins does not certainly give the priest a power to impose penances ; for it were a prodigy of interpretation to expound *remittere* by *punire*. But if by [retaining] it be said, this power is given him ; then must this needs belong to the impenitent, who are not remitted ; and not to the penitent, whose sins at that time they remit, and retain not, unless they can do both - at the same time. But if the punishment designed, be only by way of remedy, or of disposing the sinners to true penitence ; then if the person be already truly penitent, the priest has nothing to do, but to pardon him in the name of God. Now, certainly, both these things may be done without the special enumeration of all his sins."

The conclusion which we reach therefore is, that the claim of the Romish priest to act *judicially* in what he calls the sacrament of penance is utterly unfounded. And if in this we be correct, then the superstructure which with so much ingenuity Bellarmine and others have reared on this foundation falls to the ground. For, if the priest be *not a judge*, authorized by his sentence to reconcile men to God by remission of sins committed after baptism ; then the priests have no need of knowing the sins one by one ; and if they need not know them, then the sinner need not confess them to the priest : *ergo*, Christ has neither directly nor indirectly

imposed on the sinner the obligation of seeking the remission of his sins through the medium of confession to a priest.

But would you not, my dear friend, from the extraordinary tone of confident assertion on the part of the Church of Rome, naturally conclude that not a dissentient voice was to be found within her borders, on the interpretation given by the Council of Trent of the passage from John, which we have been considering:—would you not suppose that all admitted confession to be an institution of Christ? How then will you be surprised when I tell you that some men, as wise and good as Rome ever had in her communion, have flatly contradicted her interpretation of the passage. Hear Bishop Taylor again:

“ Besides that all the Canonists allow not that confession was instituted by Christ; Aquinas, Scotus, Gabriel Clavanius, the author of the *Summa Evangelica*, Hugo de St. Victore, Bonaventure, Alensis, Tho. Waldensis, Ferus, Cajetan, Erasmus, B. Rhenanus and Jansenius, though differing much in the particulars of this question, yet all consent that *precisely from these words of Christ, no necessity of confession to a priest can be concluded.*”

“ Who shall decide when Doctors disagree ?”

You and I have been taught to resort to the word of God, as received and understood in the first ages of the Christian Church. By that then let us abide, and before I have done we will endeavour to discover from the testimony of pious and good men what the primitive church both believed and practised; we will see whether they knew any thing of the present Romish doctrine of auricular confession: but

for the present, it is sufficient for us to say that it will be time enough for Rome to demand our assent to her dogmas when all her own writers and scholars have assented to them, and when they can be sustained by the testimony of God's word, and the voice of genuine, uncorrupted Christian antiquity; until that time, however, we trust it will be deemed "no sin against the law of love," to smite at her arrogance, the impudence of which may be forgiven in the conviction of its impotence.

But further, not only must the penitent confess all sins privately, but, says the Church of Rome, the priest, as God's vicegerent, has power to *absolve and forgive* those sins, upon certain conditions imposed on the penitent; and this involves the Romish doctrine of *satisfaction* as one of the ingredients of their pretended sacrament of penance. This idea of satisfaction made by man for his sins is founded on the distinction they make between punishment temporal and punishment eternal; and further by the dogma that temporal punishment for sin is remitted by the penitent's *satisfying* the justice of God, either by doing voluntary, or enjoined acts of penance, by obtaining indulgences, or by suffering the penalty in purgatory. And here, by the way, you have the true origin of their doctrine of purgatory. It is not founded, as some have supposed, on the "place of departed spirits;" in which, as I apprehend, our branch of the Church believes, with full warranty both of Scripture and legitimate antiquity: but it is part of a corrupt system, which finds its interest in saying: 1st, if you will not submit to the temporal punishment imposed by the priest here, you

will have to bear it hereafter, for there is a place, purgatory, made for that very purpose: and 2d, in persuading the ignorant that if they have any friends in purgatory, they may release them by paying money to the priests for masses for their souls; and so purgatory becomes, just as indulgences are, part of the capital stock of the Romish exchequer.

But it is best to let the Romanist speak for himself on the subject of satisfaction. The Council of Trent, in her 14th session, chapter 8th, declares that "the notion that an offence is never forgiven by the Lord, without a remission of the whole punishment, is altogether false and contrary to the word of God." "We are able to make satisfaction to God the Father, through Christ Jesus, not only by punishments voluntarily endured by us as chastisements for sin, or imposed at the pleasure of the priest according to the degree of the offence, but also by temporal pains, inflicted by God himself and by us patiently borne." Now here we cannot but pause a moment, to ask, in the case of a penitent on whom the priest has imposed a penance, during which some grievous calamity from God falls on the penitent, and is meekly borne, we ask, How is the priest to know, on his own doctrine, but that such visitation from heaven is actually the temporal punishment sent by God to work out, by patient endurance, satisfaction for the very sin on which he, the priest, has imposed penance? And if it be, (and surely neither the priest nor any one else can say with certainty that he knows it is *not*,) what becomes of the priest's claim to act as God's vicegerent, and under the infallible guidance of the Eternal Spirit to impose such penal satisfaction for

sin as God will surely ratify ; when here, (on the Romish doctrine that afflictions on earth are satisfaction,) God may actually be demanding *more* than the priest required ? What becomes of the priest's pretended powers as a *judge* appointed and specially instructed by God to determine officially the demerit of sins ? The emptiness of his claim, on this view of the subject, can no otherwise be evaded than by a *petitio principii* : he may beg the question, and say that he knows the afflictions sent from God are *not* for the sins that he sentenced to be satisfied by penance, because God gave him the power as a judge infallibly to pronounce such a sentence as He himself would have pronounced ; and *therefore* the afflictions *must* be in satisfaction for some other sins : but the whole *jugulum causæ* is, Did God give him this judicial power which he claims ? But to return to the Council of Trent on this point of satisfaction :

Canon 12. If any one shall affirm that the entire punishment is always remitted by God, together with the guilt ; and that penitents need no other satisfaction than faith, by which they apprehend, or lay hold of, Christ, as having made satisfaction for them : *let him be accursed !*

Canon 13. If any one shall affirm that we can by no means make satisfaction to God for our sins, through the merits of Christ, as far as the temporal penalty is concerned, either by punishments inflicted on us by him, and patiently borne, or enjoined by the priest, but not undertaken of our own accord, such as fastings, prayers, alms, or other works of piety, and therefore that the best penance is a new life only : *let him be accursed !*

Canon 15. If any one shall affirm that the keys are given to the Church to loose only, and not also to bind; and that, therefore, when priests impose punishments on those who confess, they act in opposition to the design of the keys, and against the institution of Christ; and that it is a fiction that, by virtue of the keys, when the eternal punishment is taken away, the temporal punishment remains to be endured: *let him be accursed!*

Hear also the Roman Catechism :

“ Satisfaction is the full payment of a debt.” p. 265. It is “ the compensation made by man to God, by doing something *in atonement* for the sins which he has committed.” *Ibid.*

Of the performance of a prescribed penance, this is its language :—“ It makes satisfaction to God for the sins which he [the penitent] has committed, and this is an act of justice toward God.” p. 238.

“ Afflictions coming from the hand of God, if borne with patience, are an abundant source of satisfaction, and of merit.” p. 272.

One further remark completes the view of this doctrine of satisfaction. Rome teaches that the Church has a stock of merits, composed

1st. Of the excess of the merits of our Saviour above what was necessary to satisfy for the eternal punishment of men’s sins; and

2d. Of the merits of all the saints that were more than necessary to satisfy for themselves.

This is very valuable stock. The dividends on it are

twofold ; 1st, indulgences, and 2d, masses to take the suffering dead out of purgatory ; but as the whole stock belongs to the Church, i. e. to the Pope, bishops, and clergy, the dividends are all theirs likewise : and these, there being no competition in the market, they dispose of at their own prices, leaving the capital stock untouched ; for, as Christ's merits are infinite, the excess from that source of course cannot be exhausted : and as to saintly superabundance, saints of excessive holiness are always dying, and the Church, as a standing residuary legatee, takes all the holiness they leave, over and above what was indispensable for their admission into glory.

Excuse me, my dear friend, if I seem to indulge for a moment in levity. It is true the subject is one of vast importance, and there is an awful wickedness in man's thus deliberately turning the merits of the adorable Redeemer of sinners into an article of merchandise ; but it must also be confessed, there is something which is calculated to provoke a smile, in the contemplation of the cool and unblushing impudence with which men pretend, in one breath, to sell us for money an indulgence to sin, and in the next, when we have dared to sin without previously paying for such indulgence, to sell us, again for money, peace with God, His pardon, and a restoration to His favor.

Now we object to their whole doctrine on this subject that it has no foundation either in reason or Scripture.

Sin is the act, *guilt* is the moral consequence, the dèfilement of soul resulting from that act, and imposes the *obligation* to endure a commensurate penalty. When God for Christ's sake forgives to the truly penitent the *guilt*, (the *sin* is *res*

acta, and cannot be undone,) he does two things: he cleanses away the moral pollution, sanctifies the soul of the penitent, making him to loathe such defilement; and he also exempts him from the eternal punishment which that guilt deserves: and thus Scripture teaches; "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to *forgive* us our sins, and to *cleanse* us from *all unrighteousness*:" and this exemption is the only possible evidence that the guilt has been forgiven. *Ex vi termini*, forgiveness involves exemption from punishment; for if punishment be inflicted, all is inflicted that would have followed non-forgiveness. You cannot, therefore, otherwise know the fact of forgiveness but by exemption from punishment. The Romanist has confounded punishment with discipline. The first is an act indicating displeasure toward an offender, or toward his conduct; the last is an act often affording proof of the highest love. Good men may repent, God may forgive them, and yet they may afterward suffer many afflictions and calamities, not as *punishments*, however, for sins already forgiven, but as merciful corrections, as necessary checks to prevent them from falling again into sins, as needful trials for testing what manner of spirit they are of. Calamities call out Christian graces in the child of God; but let a Christian poet speak:—

" Methinks, if ye would know

How visitations of calamity

Affect the pious soul, 'tis shown ye there!

Look yonder at that cloud, which, through the sky

Sailing alone, doth cross, in her career,

The rolling moon! I watch'd it as it came

And deem'd the deep opaque would blot her beams ;
 But melting like a wreath of snow, it hangs
 In folds of wavy silver round, and clothes
 The orb with richer beauties than her own,
 Then, passing, leaves her in her light serene."*

The calamities of earth are disciplinary visitations, not punishments ; and this distinction furnishes a key to the correct interpretation of all those passages of Scripture which Rome cites for her doctrine of satisfaction made for sin by earthly sorrows.

But what says the Bible on this subject ? Where does it teach us the popish distinction between the temporal and eternal punishment of sin ? Nowhere.

Christ taught us when we pray to say, "Forgive us our debts, (i. e. sins,) as we forgive our debtors." Now when we forgive, we require no payment in whole, or in part.

Rome teaches us that when God forgives, He still requires of us the further penance imposed by the priest.

Christ therefore, if Rome teach truly, taught us to ask of God what we know He never will grant.

Forgiveness is represented in Scripture as being entirely an act of GRACE—free and gratuitous.

"Being justified freely by his *grace*, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

And this grace is represented as being incompatible with *works* of penance, or any other works, as a procuring cause of forgiveness :—"If it be by works, it is no more of grace."

"I will forgive their sins, and remember their iniquities

* Southey's Roderick.

no more :” does this teach that God exacts punishment after forgiveness ? “ All his transgressions which he [the penitent sinner] hath committed, shall not be mentioned to him :” if God will not even mention, or remember them, *a fortiori*, he will not punish them afterward.

But further : mark the dishonor that this doctrine of satisfaction does to the blessed Saviour. His merits were infinite, and consequently competent to make “ a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and *satisfaction* for the sins of the whole world.” Is Rome wicked and unphilosophical enough to attempt an addition to CHRIST’S *infinity* ? She may as easily enlarge eternity.

The *examples* furnished in Scripture afford no countenance to this doctrine of satisfaction. The publican, on his repentance, was pardoned, and no satisfaction was required. St. Peter, an immediate follower of Christ, fell ; he was pardoned without satisfaction. The man sick of the palsy was forgiven ; there is no record of any satisfaction. The woman taken in adultery was told, “ Neither do I condemn thee ; go, and sin no more.” No injunction do we read about satisfaction. The weeping Magdalene heard, “ Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much :” but not a word about making satisfaction.

We have many *precepts* in the New Testament concerning preaching, praying, baptizing, communicating—and very plain precepts they are ; is it not marvellous, then, that if confession, and absolution, and penance, constituted a sacrament, by Christ’s own appointment, we should not find some directions concerning it as we do touching other acknow-

ledged sacraments and usages of the Church? We have three epistles written to bishops, whose especial duty it was to see that the Church proceeded according to Christ's appointments. These contain directions about preaching, baptizing, ordaining, the holy communion, &c., but not one word about confession and satisfaction. Why did not St. Paul instruct Timothy and Titus to appoint a "penitentiary," as Rome calls him, to hear auricular confessions? His subject called for it, inasmuch as he does teach them how to conduct the public discipline of offenders; he tells them to administer rebuke to them openly before all men. Why did he not furnish them with an ecclesiastical tariff, with what Bishop Taylor calls "penitential tables" and "penitential canons," and a "chancery tax?"

Why, when writing to private Christians, does he command every one who is about to receive the holy communion, "to examine himself and so let him eat?" Why does he not order them, as Rome now does, to go to auricular confession to be examined by a priest before coming to the communion? Certainly if it were an indispensable Christian duty, this was the time to enforce it.

There is but one passage in all St. Paul's epistles that is applicable to auricular confession. It is that in which he speaks of "some that creep into houses, and lead captive silly women." "I should have thought, (says Bishop Jeremy Taylor,) he had intended it against such as then abused auricular confession; it being so like what they do now; but that St. Paul knew nothing of these lately introduced practices."

And this quotation from the good bishop suggests to me

the propriety of saying a word about the injurious effects of auricular confession, viewed in reference to morals. If Christ appointed it, the abuse of his appointment would certainly form no sufficient argument against its lawful use; but, inasmuch as we think its appointment by our Saviour is at least questionable; and more especially, as what Rome teaches to be the *legitimate* use of it tends to the grossest immorality, we cannot help thinking that such immorality does furnish a reason for believing that it never could have come from Christ.

The proper treatment of this part of the subject is not without difficulty. I am not willing to pollute my letter with the beastly indecency set forth by the Church of Rome in the interrogatories of the confessional; nor yet can I do justice to the subject without verifying my remarks by reference to Rome's own writings. I must compromise the matter by enclosing a paper copied from the original in Latin, and containing enough to show you that I do not traduce the Church of Rome.* The questions propounded to females, whether married or single, are such as no virtuous woman can hear without a blush of mingled shame and indignation; while to an immodest woman, they are but suggestive of impurity, and provocatives to sin. It has long been my deliberate conviction that the husband or father who permits his wife or daughter to go to auricular confession, has no one but himself to blame, should he afterward find the name of his family overwhelmed with shame and disgrace, by a lapse from female virtue.

* See Appendix, *Publisher*.

Hear again our good bishop Taylor.

“Let it be considered that there being some things, which St. Paul says are not to be *so much as named among Christians*; it must needs look indecently that all men and all women should come and make the priest’s ears a common sewer to empty all their filthiness; and that which a modest man would blush to hear, he must be used to, and it is the greatest part of his employment to attend to:—— and it not only pollutes the priest’s ears but his tongue too; for lest any circumstance, or any sin be concealed, he thinks himself obliged to interrogate and proceed to particular questions in the basest things. Such as that which is to be seen in Burchard, and such which are too largely described in Sanchez; which thing does not only deturpate all honest and modest conversation, but it teaches men to understand more sins than ever they (it may be) knew of. I need not tell how the continual representment of such things to the priest must needs infect the fancy and the memory with filthy imaginations, and be a state of temptation to them that are very often young men, and always unmarried and tempted.”

Take the list of subjects on which all both male and female are instructed to catechise themselves previous to confession, with reference to the seventh commandment: “Committed adultery, fornication or incest. Procured pollution of one’s self or others. Wanton words, looks or gestures. Lascivious dressing, colors or painting. Lewd company. Lascivious balls or revellings. Dishonest looks. Unchaste songs. Kissing or unchaste discourses. Took carnal plea-

sure, by touching myself or others of either sex. Showed some naked part of your body to entice others." (See 'Path to Paradise,' p. 46.)

Now just imagine a young female subjected to a searching examination by a priest, on these and kindred topics, conducted in secret, and prosecuted by interrogatories too indecent for repetition; and when all this obscenity is finished, imagine this poor girl, after repeating the *confiteor*, to rise from her knees, and "touch with her lips either the ear or cheek of the spiritual father" (for this is the prescribed form); and all this to be done *in secret*, with a bond laid on her conscience never to relate, even to a mother, what either he or she said, and still less what he did, or attempted to do; and I think you will be able to determine for yourself what is likely to be the practical working of the system of Romish auricular confession.

Do not suppose I am calumniating. The testimony of *facts* is too damning to admit of doubt. History has left its record behind for our warning. Has Rome forgotten the history of what were called *solicitants* during the pontificate of Pope Paul IV. ? Does she dare to deny that so general had become the practice among the confessors of soliciting their female penitents to commit with them indecent acts that the Pope was obliged, in order to preserve the institution of auricular confession (too valuable a discoverer of secrets to be sacrificed), to issue in 1561 a bull against *solicitants* ? Did this remedy the evil ? Was not Pius IV. obliged, in 1564, to issue a new bull, "*contra solicitantes in confessione* ?" Was not an edict published in Seville, in 1563, instructing

all who had been solicited to report within thirty days to the inquisition ; and were not the denunciations so numerous that the Recorders of the Holy Office could not register them all within the time, so that more than once it was extended by successive additional periods of thirty days ; and so that it took in all no less than one hundred and twenty days simply to register the complaints ?

Yes, verily, history tells us all this, and much more ; and it tells us, too, that the Holy Inquisitors, alarmed at the immense number of denunciations, perceived that their craft was in danger, and contrived to get rid of the whole matter by abandoning their registrations, and renouncing the prosecution of the delinquents.

But further : this system of auricular confession is unsafe in any *government*. I am not prepared to say that in our country there is, just now, any great danger to be apprehended from it ; for the genius of our institutions is one not friendly to Romish principles, should they at present attempt to do here what they have heretofore done elsewhere ; but I do say, that the principles avowed, if carried out, are incompatible with the safety of any government. You will bear in mind that *secrecy* on the part of the priest who hears confession is enjoined by Rome under the heaviest penalties here and hereafter. Now listen to the teachings of Rome, extracted from the class-book which she deliberately adopted for the instruction of her young clergy at Maynooth :

“ *Can a case be given in which it is lawful to break the secrecy of confession ?* ”

“ *Ans.* None can be given, although the life or safety of

a man may depend on it; or even the *destruction of the commonwealth* [interitus reipublicæ]. Nor can the Pope himself dispense with it; because the secrecy of the seal of confession is more binding than the obligations of an oath, a vow, a natural secret, &c. : and this by the positive will of God.

“ *What then should a confessor answer when interrogated concerning any truth which he knows by sacramental confession only?* ”

“ *Ans.* He ought to answer that *he does not know it*; and if necessary, ought to *confirm that by an oath*.

“ *Objection.* *It is in no case lawful to lie, but the confessor lies because he knows the truth; therefore, &c.* ”

“ *Ans.* The minor proposition I deny, because such a confessor is interrogated *as a man*, and answers *as a man*; but, as a man, he does not know this truth, although he may know it as God, as St. Thomas [Aquinas] says, Qu. 11, Art. 1 and 3: and this sense properly exists in the answer; for when he is interrogated, or responds, in other cases than confession, he is considered *as a man*.

“ *But what if it should be directly inquired of the confessor whether he knows that thing by sacramental confession?* ”

“ In this case he ought to answer nothing; so says Steyart, with Sylvius; but such a question is to be rejected as impious: or the confessor may say absolutely to the question, not relatively, ‘ *I know nothing* ;’ because the word I (*ego*) refers to human knowledge.”*

Now what have we here?

* Theologia Petri Dens. De fractione sigilli sacramentalis, No. 160, vol. vi., p. 219. (Dublin Edition.)

1st. That what a priest learns in confession, he knows not as man, but as God.

2dly. That he may innocently tell a deliberate lie.

3dly. That he may as innocently commit a perjury, by swearing to it.

4thly. That he is bound to hold his peace, when speaking would prevent the death of a fellow-being, or his damnation; or the destruction of the republic.

From this last it follows that if a priest knew by means of confession that there was a plan to take the life of the President, or a conspiracy to dissolve the union of these States; or a traitorous purpose, in time of war, to desert with a division of the army, and go over to the enemy, on the eve of a battle, he owes no duty to his country strong enough to justify him in communicating these things. And for what is all this? To sustain the authority of the Romish priesthood in a country whose protection is repaid by silently permitting the sacrifice of her dearest interests.

I have been obliged to make my letter of unusual length, and therefore will here conclude.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

The next assertion of Rome is, that such confession as she teaches, was always the doctrine of the Church of Christ. The examination of this will be most easily made by a brief history of confession.

All the sins that can be confessed must fall under one or the other of the three following heads :

1. Those whereby God and God only is offended.

2. Those whereby some particular fellow-creature is offended as well as God.

3. Those whereby no particular person is offended, but scandal is given to the public society of Christians to which we belong, as well as to God.

As to the first ; it is agreeable to God's word, that men should confess such sins to God ; and if they *voluntarily choose* to confess them even privately to a fellow Christian or to a Christian minister, with the view of obtaining direction to overcome some particular sin ; or, under a conscience troubled for sin in general, to learn something of the terms of the gospel, I know not where *such* confession is declared unlawful.

As to the second class, sins whereby we have injured particular persons, it is an unquestionable Christian duty to confess them both to God and to the person injured, and further, it is a duty, as far as possible, to make restitution to the latter.

As to the third class, when public scandal is given to the Church, the body of Christ, though no particular person be offended, it is a duty to confess such sins to God, and to men, as *publicly* as we have publicly sinned against the whole body of Christian brethren. The obligation to such confession arises from the duty of doing away, as far as is possible by the offender, the evils occasioned by his pernicious example.

You have here then, what I understand to be the doctrine of Protestants on the subject of confession: for you must not suppose we reject confession of sins, as a part of Christian duty. What we oppose, is the doctrine of auricular confession to a priest as taught by the Church of Rome. By confession, that Church does not mean confession to God, nor confession to an injured person, nor public confession to the Church, but whispered confession to a priest, and nothing else.

The first confessions of which we read in ecclesiastical history, carry us back to the primitive Church, and were such public confessions as are spoken of in the third class above named. The discipline of the early Church was remarkably rigorous; and if now alas! it be as remarkably relaxed, we may impute it in a great degree to the use of private confession, voluntary at first, but gradually en-

croaching more and more on the ancient discipline, until it reached the enormity of auricular confession as an institution of Christ.

If, in early times, a Christian man became immoral, he was admonished ; if he reformed not, he was cast out of the communion of the faithful, and he could never be readmitted to the Christian church, but by a confession and repentance as public as his sin had been. Hear the account given by Tertullian of what was called the *exomologesis*. This Greek word means no more, as applied to sin, than a full and thorough public acknowledgment or confession of it : the Roman writers, however, have labored hard to pervert its meaning, and hence, whenever they meet with it in any of the ancient authors, interpret it to mean private auricular confession. But I quote Tertullian now, not so much to show you, as however the passage does, that his definition of the *exomologesis* says not one word about auricular confession ; but to let you see what was the severity of the ancient discipline.

“ The *Exomologesis* is the discipline of a man’s prostrating and humbling himself, enjoining him a conversation that may move God to mercy. It obliges a man to change his habit and his food, to lie in sackcloth and in ashes, to dishonor his body by a neglect of dress and ornament, to afflict his soul with sorrow, and to change his former sinful conversation by a quite contrary practice ; to use meat and drink, not to please his appetite, but only for the sake of his soul ; to quicken his prayers and devotions by frequent fastings ; to groan and weep, and cry unto the Lord God both day and night ; to turn to the presbyters of the Church, to

kneel before the beloved ones of God, and beg of all the brethren, that they would become intercessors for his pardon: all this the *Exomologesis* requires to recommend a true repentance.”*

This was the ancient public discipline, it was in general use, and the Christians of early times were disposed to submit to it. You will therefore infer from this fact, what history confirms, that there could be but little occasion for private confession, since the end in view was so much better answered by that which was public.

Thus public confession in the Church continued for a long time; but there was also a voluntary private confession of one layman to another, founded on the passage in James, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.” Sometimes, also, a layman voluntarily confessed his faults to a priest, not as to one having power to pardon, but simply as to an ecclesiastic, a good man in whom he had confidence: this is obvious from the fact, that such confessions were as often made to a deacon as to a priest.

Presently these private confessions began gradually to supersede the public ones, and public discipline became relaxed; the next step was to prohibit deacons from hearing confessions.

The priests next began to claim powers of remitting and retaining, then by degrees came the distinction between mortal and venial sins, then the Council of Lateran, in 1215, enjoined private confession to a priest at least once a year, and

the performance of the penance he imposed under pain of excommunication ; and this, as Fleury says, is the *first canon* that imposed sacramental penance. Then came finally the Council of Trent, between 1545 and 1563, and sentenced to damnation all who will not receive auricular confession as Rome now holds it.

This is, in brief, a history of the rise of this Romish institution. Now let us see how far the genuine writings of Christian authors support Rome. And here a word touching the "fathers," as they are termed, may not be inappropriate. He is an unwise man who, from prejudice, deems lightly of the fathers. Without their aid, he could not even establish the canon of Scripture. It is true that, in more ways than one, Rome has abused them. She sometimes corrupts and alters them, and always quotes them as conclusive *authority for doctrine* as well as for facts. This authority, it is true, is considered but as a branch of *tradition*; tradition, however, being made by Rome as infallible as Scripture, the concurrence of the fathers is considered in the same light as Scripture.

The enlightened Protestant Episcopalian considers the fathers as most valuable, and indeed, often the only witnesses to very important *facts*; but he acknowledges no *authority* in their doctrinal statements, compelling him to believe as they did. He is not afraid to bring his Christian views, either as to creed or practice, into juxtaposition with the *facts* contained in the *genuine* writings of the early Christian authors. I say genuine, because nothing is better known to the diligent ecclesiastical student than that Rome has grossly

corrupted, and altered, and added to the writings of holy men of old, to favor her own peculiar views. On this subject I cannot of course fully enter here: volumes have been composed in a mere enumeration of the corrupt alterations made by Rome in the fathers. One or two specimens must here suffice.

An edition of Chrysostom's works was printed at Basil. In his first homily on John, the following words are stricken out: "The Church is not built on the man, but on faith." In his sermon on Pentecost, these words are erased: "There is no merit, but what is given us by Christ."

Cyril of Alexandria has been mutilated by the erasure of the following words: "As it is written, Jesus dwells in our hearts by faith."

Epiphanius in his comments on the epistle to the Romans, wrote: "The holy Church of God adores not the creature." The last four words are stricken out.

In the preface of an edition of Augustine, published at Venice, are these words: "We have taken care that all those things which could affect the minds of the faithful with heretical pravity, or would cause them to deviate from the Catholic orthodox faith, be taken away."

On this subject of auricular confession particularly, have they taken very great liberties with the fathers. In an investigation, once made into their corruptions to sustain this dogma, I found (as my notes made at the time show me) liberties taken with Clement, Ambrose, Cyprian, Basil, Jerome, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and Athanasius.

It is therefore a wise rule in reading Romish writers to

verify *all* their quotations from the *fathers*. The changes are often very dexterously made by the mere omission of a letter. An instance now occurs in a passage from Tertulian, already quoted in this letter; where the Latin word *caris* (the dear, or beloved ones, or friends of God) is ingeniously altered in the sense, by simply dropping the initial letter; thus making it read, *aris* (the altars of God).

With these remarks I proceed to the fathers, simply requesting you to observe that a great many passages which the Romanists unhesitatingly apply to auricular confession, are equally applicable to the *general public confession*, or that species of private confession, of which I have already spoken, and were in fact so applied by their writers.

IRENEUS.

The Romanists cite him, not forgetting to tell us that he was the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of John. They quote his passages concerning certain women who had been seduced and misled by Marcus the heretic :

“ These, often converted to the Church of God, confessed that having their bodies exterminated as it were, by him, and influenced by lust, they loved him to excess.”

Of another who had been seduced :

“ When with great labor the brethren had converted her, penetrated with grief, she spent her whole time in confessing and bewailing her sins (in exomologesi) and lamenting the crime she had been led by this magician to commit.”

One other passage :

“Cerdon, after coming into the church and making his confession, thus spent his time ; at one time privately teaching, at another, making his confession.”

These are Rome's testimonies from Ireneus for *auricular* confession ! Do you not perceive that every one of the three is applicable to the *general* confession imposed by the ancient discipline ; that the second is expressly stated to be in *exomologesi*, which Tertullian has already shown us was an open *public* act ; and that in the third, Cerdon is expressly said to have *come into the church* to make his confession ?

Now let us see whether Ireneus really held to auricular confession and priestly remission. Hear what he says :

*“CHRIST absolving men from their sins, cured them indeed. He thus manifested who he was ; for if no one can remit sins but God alone,” &c.**

His inference is that Christ was divine.

TERTULLIAN.

Rome cites the following : it is from his book, de Penitentia.

“I presume that many avoid declaring their sins, or delay it from day to day, because they have more regard for their honor, than they have for their salvation ; they resemble in this respect those who having contracted a disease in the hidden

* *Christus peccata remittens hominum, quidem curavit ; semetipsum autem, manifeste ostendit quis esset. Si autem nemo potest remittere peccata, nisi solus Deus,” &c. Iren. lib. 11, ch. 17.*

parts of their body, conceal it from the eye of their physician, and suffer themselves thus to be bereft of life through an unhappy shame."

"And again :—"*O the singular advantage to be gained by concealing our sin ! Do we think that by covering it from the eyes of men, it will escape the all-seeing eye of God ?*"

This is the writer who has so fully explained to us the *exomologesis* ; and is there one syllable in these extracts to sustain auricular confession, as Rome holds it ? Is not every word equally applicable to what undoubtedly existed in Tertullian's time, viz. open public confession, and voluntary private confession by Christians to one another ?

But let us see what we can find in Tertullian that will show us his opinion *definitely* (not by inference) of priestly remission.

"*Who remits sins but God alone ?*"*

But the Romanist will tell us that Tertullian wrote this after he became a Montanist. It is granted. What then ? Dupin (the Romanist) tells us, "as to what relates to the rule of faith, that is to say, to the principal doctrines of religion, Tertullian and the first Montanists were of the same opinion with the church." (Dupin, vol. 1, p. 96.) Rhenanus, (another Romanist) in his preface to Tertullian's treatise *de Penitentia*, certainly written before he was a Montanist, says, "Let no man wonder that Tertullian speaks nothing [*i. e.* in his treatise on repentance] of the secret or clancular confes-

* *Quis remittit delicta nisi solus Deus ?* Tertullian, *Depudicitia*, ch. 21.

sion of sins ; which, so far as we conjecture, was bred out of the old *Exomologesis*, by the unconstrained piety of men. *For we do not find it at all commanded of old."*

ORIGEN.

The Romanists give us this passage: "*If we confess our sins, not only to God, but likewise to those who have the power to heal our wounds, our sins will be effaced by Him who has said, I will blot out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy sins as a mist.*" This passage occurs in the 17th Homily on St. Luke.

We have hardly any of the homilies of Origen in the original Greek : those which we have in Latin were translated chiefly by Ruffinus (the above extract is a translation from his Latin), and he took such unwarrantable liberties that Jerome reproached him with it ; and some very learned men have doubted whether the greater part of his translations express the sentiments of Origen at all. But not now to insist on this, take the passage as quoted, and it certainly shows that remission of sins is not *man's* act, but *God's* ; while many a private brother to whom we confess our faults, has *power*, if he be the offended one, to heal by forgiveness ; or, if he be not, has power to comfort us by God's words, and to pray with us even to our *healing*. There is no auricular confession in all this.

CYPRIAN.

From this writer Rome cites a passage which, *she says*, she finds in his Sermon, *de lapsis*. “*Let each one of you confess his faults whilst he is yet in the world ; whilst his confession can be received, and whilst the satisfaction he will offer will be agreeable to God.*”

This reference to Cyprian's tract on the case of the lapsed, I cannot but consider singularly unfortunate for Rome. A few words of history are necessary for the proper understanding of this beautiful gem of Christian antiquity. After the death of Decius, persecution had ceased, and the church once more breathed in peace. Many, who in the time of persecution had renounced their faith in Christ, to escape martyrdom, now wished to be readmitted to the Church, without any act of public confession and repentance before the Church ; in other words, without passing through what Tertullian has described for us, as constituting the *exomologesis* of the early Church. It was with reference to such persons that Cyprian wrote this tract, in which he beseeches them to consider the heinousness of their sin, and exhorts them to give all proper outward proofs of their sincere sorrow for it ; as, without these, they could not be restored to the communion of the Church. It is evident also, from the tract, that even then the severity of the ancient discipline had been, as Cyprian thought, too much relaxed. A few passages might suffice for my purpose, while of the tract at large (of which a very faithful translation into English was made by Marshall) I

might content myself with saying, not one sentence can be found in it relating to the auricular confession of Rome.

But it affords such a beautiful specimen of a true Christian bishop, that I am sure you will forgive me if I dwell for a time upon it.

“The Church, we see, (thus he writes,) my beloved brethren, hath once more peace restored to her.—The happy expected day is come to all our wishes, wherein, after the dismal terrors of a long and thick darkness, the glorious light of the Gospel is now at liberty to shine upon the world with a full and undiminished lustre.” After a beautiful allusion to those who had been faithful in persecution, he thus proceeds: “But amidst all our triumphs and gratulations for the crowns of our martyrs, and for the honors which our confessors have gained by their glorious achievements, and for the unshaken firmness of the rest of our brotherhood, we have this sad abatement of our joy, that the enemy hath made some fatal inroads upon the flock of Christ.” He then thus alludes to the causes why God had sent persecution on them: “All were set upon an immeasurable increase of gain, and forgetting how the first converts to our holy religion had behaved under the personal direction and care of our Lord’s apostles, their love of money was their darling passion and the master-spring of all their actions. The religion of the clergy slackened and decayed; the faith of priests and deacons grew languid and inactive; works of charity were discontinued, and an universal license and corruption prevailed every where.” Then came the persecution, and he thus depicts

the conduct of some of the lapsed: "Some, to their shame and scandal be it ever remembered, did not stay to have the question put to them, before they denied their Lord and Saviour; they did not wait for the formality of being apprehended, but advanced of their own accord to the place of sacrifice. Unhappy wretch! wherefore dost thou take the needless pains of carrying thither a victim with thee to sacrifice? Thou art thyself that victim! Thou makest a sacrifice of thine own soul! Thou hast offered up at this altar thine own salvation, and thy faith and hope are consumed in its fatal fires."—"Nor do I mean by any thing I have said upon the case of our fallen brethren to load it with undue aggravations; I would only persuade them to seek their peace in a proper manner, and to give THE CHURCH a becoming satisfaction." He then adverts to the relaxed state of discipline: "We have a new mischief broken out among us. Through the rashness of some in granting, and of others in asking, the terms of communion are become too easy, the reins of discipline are shamefully relaxed, in opposition to the vigor and firmness wherewith the whole tenor of the gospel and the laws of God and Christ have commanded them to be held. In short, a delusive insignificant absolution is at random given, which will prove dangerous to the givers and useless to the receivers."—"The peace thus given by them, on such easy terms, is far from answering its genuine designs and purposes; 'tis a stratagem whereby the great and subtle enemy of our souls makes his attempts upon our brethren who have fallen in the late grievous trial."—"Let no persons, therefore, venture to impose upon and deceive

themselves; no man's pity can here avail them. *No one can pardon the sins committed against God but He alone who bare our sins, who suffered for our sakes, and whom God delivered up for our offences.* It is impossible that man should be greater than God, or equal to him; nor is it therefore within the power of man, who is the servant, to forgive in any case a sin of so deep a dye as this," &c.

Then follows presently the passage which Rome relies on, and pretends to quote, and in which she *interpolates* words to suit her purpose. The genuine sentence is this:—"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every one of you who have offended, make an humble and solemn confession of his sin, whilst he is yet in the land of the living." (Here Rome commences her own additions, about receiving confession, and making satisfaction.) The genuine tract thus proceeds:—"Let him turn unto the Lord his God with all his heart, and express a becoming sense of his transgression in all humility and contrition of spirit. He himself, indeed, hath taught us how we should address him for pardon: 'Turn ye even unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments.'"—"This hath been the practice of men who were meek and sincere, humble, and holy; this was the way wherein they sought for mercy at the throne of grace: yet now, the case is so far altered, that even such as have denied their Lord, are loth to submit to any penance for it, or even to implore his pardon."—"Wherefore I again exhort, persuade, and entreat you, that you would submit to a

full and proper penance for your sin, and give all becoming proofs of your hearty sorrow for it." He then describes the penance he means:—"You must ask more fervently, must continue a great while instant in prayer and supplication, must spend whole days in sorrow and whole nights in tears, and every hour of your time in mourning and lamentation."—"He [God] can grant you the forgiveness for which you are so earnest, and so much in haste; he can mitigate the sentence denounced upon your sin; he can pardon his humble supplicants, his sincere penitents, such as bring forth fruits meet for repentance."—"He who shall thus endeavor to appease the anger of God; he whom an humble sense of his sin shall inspire with greater degrees of constancy and firmness for any future encounter, will draw on himself the favorable assistance of God, and will contribute as much to the joy and triumph of the *Church* as before he had contributed to her dejection and grief; nor will he then merely receive the pardon of his sin, but even a crown of glory."

Thus speaks Cyprian; and if I have dwelt on his treatise, it was that you might see, 1st, the gradual relaxation of discipline of which I spoke in the beginning of my letter; 2d, that Cyprian had no idea of any confession here, but a public one, for the public wrong done to the *Church*; 3d, that in his view no being but God could forgive sins; 4th, that He for Christ's sake would forgive them on sincere repentance; 5th, that his (Cyprian's) office was to *declare* this to the sinner; and 6th, how unscrupulously Cyprian could be altered to accomplish a purpose.

LACTANTIUS.

The Romanist quotes thus a passage from the 17th chapter of the 4th book of his divine institutions. He is speaking of the Jewish rite of circumcision :—

“ God, who by his infinite bounty has provided us with all the means necessary to salvation, has traced out to us in the circumcision of the flesh the true idea of penance, in order that if we discover our hearts naked—that is to say, if we confess our sins, to please God—we may obtain of Him the pardon which he refuses to those who obstinately persist in their evil ways, and who conceal the sins which they have committed.”

If Rome may be permitted to *translate* as she pleases, no doubt she will make passages enough to sustain all her corruptions. Let us go to the original Latin of Lactantius, and we shall find very little of confession to a priest, and satisfaction, as part of Romish penance. I quote from the Leipsic edition of 1739 :—“ *Ut si cor nudaverimus, id est, si peccata nostra confessi, satis Deo fecerimus, veniam consequamur,*” &c. ; which I should thus translate :—“ *So that if we make naked our hearts—that is, if confessing our sins—we make satisfaction to God, or (literally) do what is enough for God [satis Deo fecerimus], we may obtain pardon,*” &c. :—and that, in the view of Lactantius, we are to “make naked our hearts” by “confessing our sins” to God, and not to man, is conclusively proved by the last words of the sentence, which the Romanist does not translate at all, viz. : “*qui non faciem, sicut homo, sed intima et arcana pectoris*

intuetur ;” *who does not, like man, look upon the face, but upon the hidden things and secrets of the breast.* This is certainly somewhat different from the phrase, “if we confess our sins, to please God.” And here it may be well to add, that this phrase, “to satisfy God,” is one which seems to be usual with Lactantius ; though, as he explains it, he means by it simply repentance for sin, and amendment of life. Thus, in his 5th book, ch. 15, he says, speaking of the return of Christians who have fallen into sin, “Seeing that it is lawful to satisfy God, and no one is so bad a worshipper of God but that, power being given him, he may return to an appeased God, and indeed with increased devotion.” And again, in his 6th book, ch. 24, he thus writes :—“Nor need any one fail, or despair of himself, if, either overcome by inclination, or impelled by lust, or deceived by error, or coerced by force, to unrighteousness of life, he fall ; for it is possible for him to be brought back and delivered, if he repent him truly of his wickedness, and, turning to better things, may satisfy God.”

But Rome relies on another quotation from this author :—“*As every sect and denomination of heretics deem themselves Christians, and theirs to be the Catholic Church, it is proper they should know that that Church is the true one in which there is confession and penance, which heals the sins and wounds to which the weakness of our flesh is subject.*” This passage, says the Romanist, occurs in his work against the Novatians. A bolder piece of unblushing impudence is not to be found in the annals of literary fraud. Lactantius never wrote a work against the Novatians. There was,

indeed, a spurious book put out under his name ; but every patristic student knows that the learned all pronounce it to be a forgery. The Romanist Dupin will not class it among the writings of Lactantius. Indeed, the passage itself is so obviously manufactured to make Rome the true Church, and confession and penance *plenary* evidence of it, that a scholar should be ashamed to refer it even to the times of Lactantius, much less to attribute it to the classical pen of the Christian Cicero.

ATHANASIUS.

The passage here adduced is said to occur in the latter part of a sermon by Athanasius on the words: "Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately at your coming thither you shall find a colt tied," &c.

"Let us examine ourselves whether our chains be loosed, that we may proceed better. If they be not loosed, deliver thyself over to the disciples of Jesus ; for there are some present who can loose thee, pursuant to that power which they have received from the Saviour. For whatsoever you shall bind (says he) on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

Now there is such a sermon, and it does contain these words, and it is printed in some of the Latin editions of Athanasius ; and so is a great deal beside that Athanasius never saw. And it so happens that this very sermon by name, is enumerated by that learned Romanist Dupin, among the supposititious or spurious works of Athanasius, and

some of the editions do not contain it. But there is another reason to induce the student to reject this passage as coming from Athanasius. You perceive that in it, the priestly power is rested on the passage about "binding" and "loosing." Do you not remember that in the beginning of my third letter, I had occasion to refer to this same passage; and then quoted Augustine and Jerome to show how the Church in their day understood it? They did not interpret it as Athanasius is here made to do, and yet all three were contemporaries. Had Athanasius interpreted it at all, I am apt to believe he would have concurred with Augustine and Jerome. Three such eminent men could not have been ignorant of what was the interpretation of that day, especially in a case where the interpretation directly affected the *practice* of each individual Christian.

BASIL.

The Romanists adduce his "authority," as they term it, in the following passages :

"One must necessarily confess his sins to those who have received from God the dispensation of his mysteries." If he confessed them openly *in the Church* he would do this.

Rome also adduces the following :

"As one does not show the infirmities of his body to every person indifferently, but only to those who understand how to cure them, so one should not make a confession of his sins, except to those who are able to apply a remedy to them."

Now, without stopping to inquire, but granting, if you

please, that this sentence is *quite* authentic, just let us see who it is that Basil believes can “apply a remedy” to sins, and consequently we shall see to whom he thinks we ought to confess them.

In his books against Eunomius (lib. v.) he thus speaks : “*If the power of remitting sins has been given to no one, as is certain, then God alone can remit them.*”

Hear him again on Psalm xxxvii. v. 8.—“*I do not make confession with my lips, to appear to the world ; but inwardly in my heart, where no eye sees ; I declare my groanings unto Thee alone who seest in secret, I roar within myself ; for I need not many words to make confession ; the groanings of my heart are sufficient for confession, and the lamentations which are sent up to Thee, my God, from the bottom of my soul.*”

AMBROSE.

This good man is very sadly misrepresented by Romish writers. In his second book on penance, ch. 3, they tell us, he says : “*That the Lord has ordained that the greatest sinners should be admitted to the participation of the heavenly gifts, provided they do penance for their sins with all their heart, acknowledging themselves guilty by a sincere confession.*” What he really says is this : “*Provided, from the whole heart, and with an open confession of sin (manifesta professione peccati) they show true repentance ; then the grace of the heavenly sacrament may be again poured out on them.*”*

* Ambrosii Opera. Basle. 1560. Tom 3, p. 201.

In fact, it is bold impudence or gross ignorance that will pretend to cite Ambrose as advocating the auricular confession of Rome. Let him speak for himself.

*“Men lend their ministry in the remission of sins, but not as having a right to absolve. They pray, and God pardons.”**

Again :—*“Tears wash away sin, which men are ashamed to confess with their voice. Weeping provides at once both for pardon and bashfulness ; tears speak our faults without horror ; tears confess our crimes without any offence to modesty or shamefacedness.”†*

Again, speaking of St. Peter's tears, he says :

“I find not what Peter said, but I find that he wept : I read of tears, but I read not of his satisfaction.”‡

Here he teaches that sorrow before God supersedes all need of confession to man.

JEROME.

The passage adduced from this writer is in Jerome's letter to Heliodorus :

“Far be it from me to say any thing disadvantageous of those who, being the successors of the Apostles, consecrate with their sacred mouth the body of Christ, by whom we are

* Amb. Op., lib. ix., ch. 18, de Spiritu Sancto.

† *Ibid.*, lib. x., in Luc. 22.

‡ *Ibid.*

also Christians, and who have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and in some manner judge before the last judgment. The priests have not only power to forgive sins when they baptize, but even after."

Now the Romanists know, or ought to know, that every word of this is rank forgery. It is quite too strong. The author of it was resolved to make testimony enough while he was about it; and so in a few lines he has contrived to drag in "the successors of the Apostles," and transubstantiation, and "the keys of the kingdom of heaven;" and that priests in confession are "judges," and may "forgive sins." Now hear what a really learned Romanist says about this letter to Heliodorus; he says, it is a "*fabulous fiction, unworthy of credit.*"*

But I am fearful of wearying you, and therefore without further notice of the perversions and unfair translations of Rome, must be content to give you passages from the early Christian writers utterly at variance with the Romish doctrine of confession.

HILARY.

In his comments on Psalm li., speaking of David's confession to God, he says :

"He teaches us that we must confess to none but Him who has made the olive fruitful by the hope of His mercy for ever and ever."

* Dupin, Ecc. Hist., Century 5th, p. 103.

AUGUSTINE.

In his "Confessions," book x. ch. 3 :

"What have I to do with men that they should hear my confessions as though they could heal all my diseases?"

In his 23d Homily, ch. 8 :

"Believe as true, that man cannot remit sins."

On the 32d Psalm, speaking of David's words, according to his version of them ; "I said I will pronounce or declare my own wickedness against myself unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest the iniquity of my heart," he proceeds :

"He had not yet pronounced it, but only promised that he would pronounce it, and yet God forgave him. He had not yet pronounced it, but only in his heart ; his confession was not yet come to his mouth, yet God heard the voice of his heart ; his voice was not yet in his mouth, but the ear of God was in his heart ; which implies, that God accepts and pardons the penitent and contrite heart, even before any formal declaration is made by vocal confession either to God or man."

CHRYSOSTOM.

In his 31st Homily on Hebrews :

"I bid thee not to bring thyself upon the stage, nor to accuse thyself unto others ; but I advise thee to observe the Prophet's direction, reveal thy way unto the Lord, confess thy sins before God, confess them before the judge : praying, if not with thy tongue, yet at least with thy memory ; and so look

to obtain mercy. It is better to be tormented with thy sins now than with the torment that shall be hereafter. If you remember them now, and continually offer them to God, and pray for them, you shall quickly blot them out ; but if you forget them now, you will then remember them against your will, when they shall be brought forth before the whole world, and be publicly exposed upon the stage before all friends, enemies, and angels."

Again, in his Homily on Penitence :

" It is not necessary that thou shouldst confess in the presence of witnesses ; let the inquiry after thy sins be made in thy own thoughts ; let this judgment be without any witness ; let God only see thee confessing."

Again, in his 30th Homily :

" I beseech you, make your confession continually to God. For I do not bring thee into the theatre of thy fellow-servants, neither do I constrain thee by any necessity to discover thy sins unto men ; unfold thy conscience before God, and show Him thy wounds, and ask the cure of Him. Show them to Him, who will not reproach thee, but only heal thee : for though thou confess not, He knows all. Confess therefore that thou mayest be a gainer ; confess that thou mayest put off thy sins in this world, and go pure into the next, and avoid that intolerable publication that will otherwise be made hereafter."

Again, in his Hom. iv., de Lazaro :

" Why art thou ashamed, and blushest to confess thy sins ? Dost thou discover them to a man that he should reproach thee ? Dost thou confess them to thy fellow-servant that he

should bring thee upon the open stage? Thou only shouldst show thy wound to Him, who is thy Lord, thy Creator, thy Physician, and thy Friend. And He says to thee, I do not command thee to go into the public theatre, and take many witnesses; but confess thy sin in private to Me alone, that I may heal thy wound, and deliver thee from thy grief."

You can now judge how far the Church of Rome is historically accurate, when she says that her doctrine of auricular confession was always held in the Church of Cl

LETTER V.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

The next assertion of Rome is that auricular confession is essential to salvation ; and further, that its purpose is to obtain a sacramental absolution of all sins committed *after baptism*.

The first of these propositions is, in truth, made by Rome dependent on the last. Her view is that sins committed *after baptism* can be remitted no otherwise than by a priest in the sacrament of penance ; that of this sacrament of penance, auricular confession is an indispensable part ; that consequently, he who dies without such confession, dies without remission of his post baptismal sins, and is necessarily damned.

The dogma of any thing being *essential* to salvation, but repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is one certainly which is nowhere *expressly* taught in Scripture. The Romanist, therefore, resorts to inference, and insists on it, that in repentance (or penance as he calls it) is included confession. Let it be granted ; the question then arises, *what is confession ?* The dispute between the

Romanist and Protestant is on the *proper* answer to this very question. Now the Romanist must prove beyond a question that *auricular confession* and *no other* can possibly be meant, before he asserts such confession to be, as an indispensable part of repentance, *essential* to salvation. But we hope we have shown that he cannot do this. Therefore, however true it may be that repentance is essential, it is false logic *thence to assume* that *auricular confession* is essential as a part of repentance; for this, as I have said, is the very point in dispute, and may not be assumed, but in a matter of such great importance must be incontestably *proved*.

Beside, Augustine and Chrysostom (with many others), whom Rome deems saints, did not believe in the necessity of auricular confession to salvation, as we have seen from their own writings. Both thought that forgiveness might be had without it. Does Rome mean to say that they have been damned? Certainly not, for she has canonized them, informally at least, by calling them saints. Then, according to Rome's own showing, a belief in auricular confession is not necessary to salvation.

As to the sins remitted in auricular confession, you will remember that the system of Rome expressly confines them to those that are *after baptism*, and for *these* penance is required. Now let us see how this will agree with Rome's teachings elsewhere. As you know, our version of the Bible is condemned as heretical by Rome, and she has her own, in which the verb which we have translated "*repent*," or the noun which we have rendered "*repentance*," are by her, in every instance of their occurrence, respectively re-

dered, "*do penance,*" and "*penance.*" She has chosen in this to follow a *Latin translation* of the original Scriptures, and not the original itself. Thus we have, "*do penance,* for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." By the way, this was the language of the *forerunner* of our Lord. We cannot but ask, How then did Christ, as they say, institute penance, if John was preaching it as a religious duty *before* Christ commenced his public ministry?

Again, we have St. Peter saying to Simon Magus, "*do penance,* therefore, for this thy wickedness." By the way, again, why did not Simon Magus immediately say to St. Peter, "holy father, shrive me?" He was so much alarmed that he begged the Apostle to pray that God would avert from him the evils he feared from his wickedness: nay, why did not St. Peter, when Simon asked his prayers, immediately bring him to the *Confiteor*? Why did he give him no other advice but to repent and pray for himself?

But I must not detain you long with the false translations the Romanists have made of the Scriptures. There is a treasure-house of these falsifications in what is called the Bourdeaux Testament, printed in 1686, by the Royal and University printer, with the imprimatur of the Archbishop, and the recommendation of two doctors of divinity. The book is very scarce, probably no copy of it exists in America. The Church of Rome endeavored to destroy the whole edition in consequence of the odium it brought on their cause. There was a copy in the library of the Duke of Sussex, and from that a reverend gentleman of Montreal was permitted to make extracts. Take a few only:

Acts xiii. 2.—As they ministered to the Lord and fasted.

Bourdeaux.—As they offered to the Lord the sacrifice of the mass and fasted.

1 *Cor.* xi. 2. *Bourdeaux*.—Ye keep my commandments as I left them with you *by tradition*.

Jude 5. *Bourdeaux*.—The faith which has once been given to the saints *by tradition*.

1 *Cor.* vii. 10. *Bourdeaux*.—To those who are joined together in the *sacrament of marriage*, I command, &c.

1 *Cor.* ix. 5. *Bourdeaux*.—Have we not power to lead about a sister, *a woman to serve us in the gospel, and to remember us with her goods*, as the other apostles?

1 *Cor.* iii. 15. *Bourdeaux*.—He himself shall be saved, yet in all cases *by the fire of purgatory*.

2 *Peter* iii. 17. *Bourdeaux*.—There is some sin which is not mortal but *venial*.

1 *Tim.* iv. 1. *Bourdeaux*.—Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some will separate themselves from the *Roman faith*, giving themselves up to spirits of error, and to doctrines *taught by devils*.

But to go back to the words “repent” and “repentance.” The original Greek, as you are aware, is a compound: the verb is μετανοεω, the noun is μετανοια; the preposition μετα denoting *change*, the root of the other part is νους, the *mind*. We have therefore a compound which every Greek scholar knows means neither more nor less than a change of the mind; an operation of the *spiritual* part of man’s nature in contradistinction to the *physical*. The grand element of repent-

ance therefore, in the view of the Protestant, is such a change of a man's spiritual perceptions, tastes, &c., as will induce a change in his conduct from sin to holiness. On the contrary, the Romanist's *agite penitentiam*, "do penance," seems primarily to be directed to some act of his *body*; while his penance, *penitentia*, traced to its root *pœna*, punishment, points to the enduring of some bodily suffering as the penance which he is to do. Repentance therefore, as the Protestant understands it, operates directly on the spirit; nay, must begin there; while in the view of the Romanist, penance seems to have more to do with the body than with the spirit; and, if it act on the latter at all, can do so only through the body.

But bearing in mind that Rome's penance is expressly and exclusively for sins *after baptism*, let us take her Bible. In Acts ii. 37, 38, according to our version, we read, "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, **REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**"

The Romanist here reads, "*do penance and be baptized.*" But how is this?

Did not Rome tell us that penance was exclusively for the remission of sins *after baptism*? How then happens it that here she teaches us in her own Bible that these persons are to do penance *before baptism*, before they had received the first sacrament, before indeed they were of the Christian

Church? And for what were they to do penance? Rome says it is always for the remission of *post* baptismal sins; but clearly it was not so here; for St. Peter tells them expressly that the *baptism* in the name of Jesus Christ was "for the remission of sins;" and Rome will not repudiate her own doctrine that baptism works *per se* remission of all *ante-baptismal* sins. Here then is one case at least, if Rome be our teacher, in which doing penance is not the indispensable remedy, to be *exclusively* applied to the remission of sins *after* baptism. But there is another difficulty in this case on Rome's understanding of doing penance. To do penance is to practise bodily austerities, and *takes some time*. Now if you will look at the residue of ch. ii. of the Acts, you will find that these persons followed Peter's advice at once, and repenting, were baptized "the same day." Where then was the time necessary for doing penance? One of two conclusions seems therefore to be inevitable; either Rome has here translated the Bible falsely; or she has flatly contradicted her own doctrine. In either case she destroys her claim to our confidence.

I have now hastily gone through the leading features of the Romish doctrine of penance, with the objections that arise in my mind to them. I now proceed to the second head I named in my first letter.

What is the doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States on the subject of confession?

Though in the determination of our own faith we of course should look to our own standards only; yet I would, had I time, examine also the faith of our mother Church of

England, to show that she does not hold the dogma of auricular confession any more than we do. I would do it to counteract, as far as I might be able, the mischievous tendency of the opinion, hinted at, if not directly expressed by some, that we differ from the Church of England *doctrinally*. It is not true, I think. We do differ *toto cælo* on the question of "an establishment," and on some others, but on the great body of *doctrinal* truth I am not aware of any difference. There was recently published in New-York, a pamphlet by a Rev. Mr. McLeod, (I think he was so called,) then a presbyter of the Church, whom I have not the honor of knowing; but I have heard it was his boast that he knew more of the family secrets of his parish, through the medium of confession, than were known to the members of the respective families themselves. I have also heard that he has since left the Church, and joined the communion of Rome. This pamphlet was composed of what purported to be extracts from standard English divines, in favor of auricular confession; but the mischief was met by the zeal and learning of the former able editor of the "Churchman," who quietly disposed of the extracts, by showing that they were *garbled*; and by furnishing the reader with a true version; thus at once redeeming the characters of the pious dead, and exposing the character of the either unlearned or dishonest living. You may find Dr. Seabury's review in the "Churchman" of April 21, 1849. An inquiry into the English doctrine of confession is also the less necessary for you, inasmuch as a recent pamphlet, emanating as it is said from an honorable Senator of North Carolina, has shown beyond all

controversy, that auricular confession is not and never was the doctrine of the English branch of the Church.

In seeking the doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, I think we shall find it by resorting to four sources.

1. The language of her acknowledged standards.
2. The teaching of her most honored and best writers.
3. Her uniform practice since her organization.
4. The acknowledgment of her avowed enemies.

1. *Her acknowledged standards.*

These I take to be the Prayer Book and Homilies. It will not be pretended that, like the Church of Rome, she has any where *expressly* decreed the necessity or duty of *auricular* confession. But she has directed the confession of sins. The inquiry therefore is, whether what she has thus directed is accompanied by any thing which shows that she could have meant *nothing else* but *auricular* confession? For it must not be forgotten that there are other kinds of confession which were well known to the primitive Church; and it may be she means some one or other of these, inasmuch as she claims to adhere to what was primitive. The first place then in the "Common Prayer" which brings confession to our notice, is an exhortation addressed by the minister to the congregation assembled for worship in open church, in which he tells them that we are taught, in sundry places of Scripture, "to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness, and that we should not dissemble nor cloak them *before the*

face of Almighty God,” &c.—“but confess them,” &c., “to the end that we may obtain forgiveness,” &c., “by His infinite goodness and mercy.” He then proceeds to tell them that though “we ought *at all times* humbly to acknowledge our sins *before God,*” yet it is especially appropriate to do so “*when we assemble and meet together*” (i. e. of course *in public*) for purposes of worship.

Then the rubric speaks of a “*general confession,*” to be said by the *whole congregation*; after the minister, *all kneeling.*”

Then follows a general acknowledgment of sin, made with an audible voice by all, *both minister and people*; and a humble supplication to God for mercy, and grace through our blessed Saviour, to live better.

The rubric then speaks of “the *declaration of absolution or remission of sins,* to be made by the priest alone:” and two forms of this “*declaration*” then follow. The first is exceedingly specific in setting forth what the Church believes the minister of Christ may do. It declares that God “hath given power and commandment to his ministers to *declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins.* He (God) pardoneth and absolveth,” &c.

Now of this form one or two remarks may help us to reach our doctrine. It was composed for the second edition of the Book of Common Prayer of King Edward VI., and, therefore, was not likely to lean to the dogmas of Rome; but secondly, this second edition “was prepared with the assistance of several distinguished foreign Protestants of the

Presbyterian communion ;” and this very form of declaring absolution was avowedly levelled against the doctrine of Rome on the subject of priestly absolution. Remember, I am not now asking whether it was best to call in such aid. I am concerned here simply to find out the true *meaning*.

The second form is from the liturgy of the Greek Church, and was undoubtedly used both in the Greek and Latin Churches in their primitive state. In fact they had scarce any other until within the last four or five hundred years. This is entirely *precatory* or *petitionary*, and consequently the minister, as such, merely *states* authoritatively the divine promise of pardon, on the condition of faith and repentance ; and then, on the ground that this condition is fulfilled, begs of God to make His promise good. His act is purely MINISTERIAL. Nor would I dispute with those who rather deem it an *authoritative assurance* of God’s pardon to him who is, at the moment, truly repentant and believing.

Now can we gather that the Church meant auricular confession in any thing we find here ? Certainly not, for 1st, the confession is general ; 2d, is made to Almighty God, and not to the priest ; 3d, is made in an audible voice before the whole Church ; 4th, contains no specific enumeration of particular sins ; 5th, the priest confesses as well as the people ; 6th, is followed not by “I absolve thee,” from the priest, but by “God hath given me power and commandment to say to you, that if you be truly penitent He pardoneth and absolveth you.”

I infer then, that as *auricular* confession is clearly not to be found here, the Church meant to adhere simply to what was undoubtedly the primitive usage of the Church, viz., a

general confession of sins as the first and most appropriate step in public worship.

Next let us proceed to the office for the Holy Communion. Here is a confession.

The rubric preceding it terms it, as in the former case, "a *general* confession," and expressly directs it to be made "by the Priest and all those who are minded to receive the Holy Communion." It is a *public* act. The declaration of absolution that follows, is the second of those considered above; and I presume I need not stop to show that there is no auricular confession here: what has already been said is applicable here, to show that some other sort of confession is meant. But if on this subject reasonable doubt could exist, it would certainly be removed by an examination of the form of exhortation to be used by the minister when he gives "warning" of the communion, which he is always obliged to do upon the Sunday, or some holyday immediately preceding. What is it? "So to search and examine your own consciences;" (exactly as St. Paul taught—"Let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup;") "Examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments, and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended either by will, word, or deed, (this certainly includes all possible sin,) there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to *confess yourselves to Almighty God*, with full purpose of amendment of life." It then proceeds to speak of offences not against God only, but also against a fellow-man, exhorting to restitution and forgiveness of injuries, and to reconciliation with enemies; and the Church authoritatively declares these things to be

a part of the preparation for the Holy Communion. Then it goes on; "if there be any of you who *by these means* cannot *quiet his own conscience* herein,"—what is he to do? Go to auricular confession? Not a syllable of it. Men go to auricular confession for a *judicial sentence of pardon*; but he is to come for "further comfort or counsel;" is to "open his grief" to Christ's minister, "that he may receive such godly *counsel and advice* as may tend to the quieting of his conscience and the removing of all scruple and doubtfulness." Now when "comfort, counsel, and advice" to a troubled sinner can be translated into *Ego absolvo te*, &c., then, and not till then, will auricular confession be found here.

But he goes *privately*. Grant it. What then? If a Christian, troubled in mind, voluntarily choose to state his trouble to a minister in whom he has confidence as a godly man, or even to a judicious fellow Christian, who is but a layman, if he seek of them their counsel or their prayers, would Rome deem this auricular confession? Certainly not. Then how does it become auricular confession in our communion service?

Such voluntary resort for godly counsel was doubtless practised in the primitive Church. I know not where our Church has either forbidden or commanded it; it would have been strange had she done either, seeing that the act is a purely voluntary one. She may *advise* it, as here, in *particular* cases, but she has nowhere said to her children, You shall be punished if you do not follow this advice; whereas, Rome has said to her followers, If you go not to auricular confession and get judicial, priestly absolution

before coming to the sacrament, you shall be damned. It must be a mind strangely constituted that can find a parallel in the cases.

Again, when we come to the communion, what says our dear mother, the Church, to us? "*Judge* therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord." She does not send us to any priest to be judged. "Repent ye truly of your sins past." She does not order us to go to a priest that he may impose on us penance.

So when she invites our approach: "Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins." *How* repent of our sins? Evidently according to what she understands by repentance. And how does she understand it? Exactly as she has set it forth in her previous warning and exhortation, and no otherwise. No one may infer because she uses the *words* repentance, confession, and absolution, that therefore, *ex vi termini*, she adopts the *Romish* doctrine of *penance*; and yet this is really the argument of some.

We turn next to the "visitation of the sick." The priest is directed to say in his exhortation, "I require you to *examine yourself and your estate, both towards God and man*, so that accusing and *condemning yourself* for your own faults, you may find mercy at our Heavenly Father's hand, for Christ's sake." After the sick man's assent to the creed, the rubric follows; "then shall the minister examine whether he repent him truly of his sins." He is not directed to question him as to what his sins are, one by one, but be they what they may, as to either number or enormity, he is simply to examine the man as to whether he truly repents

of them. The truth and sincerity of that repentance depend on the sick man, and all that the priest can possibly know is on his word. The Church very properly frames her prayer on the supposition of his sincerity; for she certainly cannot frame a prayer for God's mercy on the supposition that the person prayed for is a hypocrite; and in that prayer there is no *absolvo te*, but it is, "O, most merciful God who," &c., "dost so put away the sins of those who truly repent that thou rememberest them no more," &c.—"consider his condition"—"impute not unto him his former sins." Does all this look as if the Church supposed that the priest had any power to forgive him?

Now the English Prayer Book contains in this office the following. "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, *if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter*, (mark, it is not the general rule, but the exception in a particular case of some special sin or weight on his conscience,) after which confession the Priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it,) after this sort."

Then follows an absolution concluding with the words, "I absolve thee from all thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

But none of this is in our Prayer Book. Bishop Brownell remarks on it: "Our reviewers have done well to reject it. Commentators have indeed given a construction to it which may be tolerated, but in its most obvious acceptance, it is too nearly allied to those notions of absolution which have prevailed to such a mischievous extent in the

Roman Church." I am free to confess that I think when the whole office is taken together it admits of a construction very different from the doctrine of absolution as held by Rome. But be that as it may, certain it is that the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States is not affected by it, whatever may be its interpretation, for it is not in her Prayer Book.

Nor was it left out carelessly. You may possibly have heard of the first Book of Common Prayer published after the Revolution, and known as "The Proposed Book." It was prepared by a committee appointed in the General Convention of 1785, and was proposed to the Church in the several States for consideration; not authoritatively enjoined for use. This committee was composed of Bishop White, Dr. William Smith, of Maryland, and Dr. Charles Henry Wharton, then of Delaware, who had once been a Roman Catholic priest at Worcester, in England. The Church had not in it at that day, three more learned ecclesiastics. This latter named gentleman especially had possessed every desirable advantage in the attainment of theological learning. He was a Jesuit before he left the Church of Rome. He thus speaks of himself: "He was sent to Europe when very young, and after passing through some years of very rigid discipline in a foreign academy, secluded from society, he was induced to take orders among a body of men equally distinguished by their eminence and their fall."*

* Dr. Wharton's letter to the Roman Catholics of the city of Worcester, p. 15. Note.

He did not therefore lack a thorough knowledge of the dogmas of Rome. After leaving the Romanists, he addressed to his former flock, the letter from which I have just quoted. In this he explains the reasons of his change; and briefly commenting on certain leading doctrines of Rome, thus writes:

“Since the decision of the Council of Trent, it is become an article of your faith ‘that a priest has power to forgive sins.’ But Peter Lombard, the famous *master of the sentences*, the Newton, the Aristotle of scholastic divines, was so far from discovering this prerogative in the Scriptures, that he rejects it at large, and is supported in his opinion by almost all the ancient schoolmen of his time.* Their doctrine is thus compendiously delivered by Cardinal Hugo, who lived at that period: ‘The priest cannot bind or loosen the sinner *with* or *from* the bond of the *fault*, or the *punishment*; but only *declare* him to be bound or loosened; as the Levitical priest did not infect or cleanse the leper, but only declared him infected or clean.’”† (See Dr. Wharton’s letter, p. 20., Ed. 1784, Philadelphia.) I mention these particulars merely as historical facts, to be borne in mind in determining how far such a man as Dr. Wharton was likely to countenance the introduction into our Prayer Book of auricular confession and priestly absolution.

It so happens that I have now before me the original MSS. of this committee, containing, in different parts of them, the handwriting of each of the three gentlemen. In Dr. Whar-

* Lib. 4 Sentent. dist. 8. c. f.

† In Math. 26.

ton's appears the following: "In the visitation of the *sick*, instead of the absolution as it now stands [in the English Prayer Book is meant] insert the declaration of forgiveness which is appointed for the communion service; or, either of the two collects which are taken from the commination office and appropriated to Ash Wednesday may be used." If you will turn to our office for Ash Wednesday you will find the two prayers alluded to, one of which expressly declares of God, "to thee only it appertaineth to forgive sins." I have also the "Proposed Book" before me; it was printed in Philadelphia by Hall & Sellers, 1786. On turning to the visitation of the sick in it, I find a rubric, copied in part from that of the Church of England, as follows: "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession the minister shall say:" and then, pursuant to Dr. Wharton's suggestions, follows the shorter declaration of absolution, as it stands in the communion service, and in the order of morning prayer.

But this is not all, for, after we had obtained the Episcopate, in the General Convention of October, 1789, the Prayer Book underwent its final revision, when even this rubric and shorter declaration of absolution were *entirely stricken out* of the office for the visitation of the sick.

So that from this little historical sketch you can judge how far it was in the minds of the framers of our liturgy to countenance, in any part of it, auricular confession and priestly absolution.

Now we come to the "visitation of prisoners."

All that has reference to the subject we are considering is in the following rubric:

“Then shall the minister examine whether he repent him truly of his sins, exhorting him to a *particular confession* of the sin for which he is *condemned*; and upon confession, he shall” (not absolve him, but) “instruct him what satisfaction ought to be made to those whom he has offended thereby; and if he knoweth any combination in wickedness, or any evil practices designed against others, let him be admonished to the utmost of his power to discover and prevent them.”

“After this confession the minister shall *declare* to him the pardoning mercy of God in the form which is used in the communion service.”

Here remark, the Church exhorts to the special confession of *one* sin only; auricular confession demands *all*. Observe further, that the object of the confession is not *absolution*, for that, the minister is not directed to give him even after his confession; but it is twofold, to warn him that if harm to others have already followed from his crime, or if his crime be but one of the links of a chain formed by a combination to carry out a series of crimes, his repentance is defective, if he make not satisfaction for the one, and interpose not to prevent the success of the combination to commit others. But let us test this by a common sense view. Let us suppose a minister acting under this rubric, and that a felon convict confesses to him a combination on the part of accomplices at large, to commit some other crime; is there a clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States who would hold himself bound by his con-

science to make himself a colleague with felons, an accessory before the fact to a felony? Would he, as an upright man, hesitate to communicate what he had thus heard, in order to prevent the crime? You answer *no*. Then there can be no Romish auricular confession taught by the Church here, for that, as you have seen, would bind him to hold his peace, though it should cost the "death of a man," or the "safety of the republic."

But let us look a little at the history of this office. It is not in the English Prayer Book; we took it from the Irish book; and in the MS. minutes of our committee to which I have before referred, I find in the handwriting of Dr. Wharton, the following:

"A form of prayer and visitation of prisoners for notorious crimes, and especially persons under sentence of death, being much wanted, the form entitled, "Prayers for persons under sentence of death," agreed upon in a Synod of the Archbishops and Bishops, and the rest of the clergy of Ireland, at Dublin, in the year 1711, as it now stands in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of Ireland, is agreed upon and ordered to be adopted, with the following alterations, viz.:

"For the absolution take the same declaration of forgiveness, or either of the collects above directed for the visitation of the sick."

Accordingly in the "Proposed Book," the rubric was framed as it now stands, and the shorter declaration of absolution, as in the communion service, was directed to be used. It has so remained ever since.

Let us now turn to the homilies, and we shall then have finished examining the language of our standards of doctrine. I will quote but one passage from the homily on repentance: it has already been urged very pertinently and forcibly by the Rev. Mr. Hanson, of Waddington, N. Y., in his tract on the doctrine of repentance; but as you may not have seen that, I will give you the passage:

“If we will, with a sorrowful and contrite heart, make an unfeigned confession of our sins unto God, he will freely and frankly forgive them, and so put all our wickedness out of remembrance, and before the sight of His Majesty, that they shall be no more thought upon. Hereunto doth pertain the golden saying of the Holy Prophet David, where he saith in this manner, ‘Then I acknowledged my sin unto thee, neither did I hide my iniquity. I said I will confess against myself wickedness unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the ungodliness of my sin.’ These are also the words of John the Evangelist. ‘If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to make us clean from all our wickedness,’ which ought to be understood of the confession that is made unto God. Besides this there is another kind of confession, which is needful and necessary. And of the same doth St. James speak after this manner, saying, ‘Acknowledge your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be saved.’ As if he should say, open that which grieveth you that a remedy may be found. And this is commanded both for him that complaineth, and for him that heareth, that the one show his grief unto the other. The true meaning of it is, that the faithful ought to acknowledge their offences, whereby some hatred, rancor, grudge or malice having risen or grown among them one to another, that a brotherly reconciliation may be had, without which nothing that we can do can be acceptable unto God, as our Saviour Jesus Christ doth witness himself, saying, ‘When thou offerest thine offering,’ &c. It may also be thus taken that we ought to confess our weakness and infirmities one to another, to the end that knowing each other’s frailness we may the more earnestly pray together unto Almighty God our Heavenly Father.”

And it thus speaks of auricular confession :

“ Let us, with fear and trembling, and with a true contrite heart, use that kind of confession that God doth command in His word ; and then doubtless, as he is faithful and righteous, he will forgive us our sins, and make us clean from all wickedness. I do not say, but if any of them do find themselves troubled in conscience, they may repair to their learned curate or pastor, or to some other godly learned man, and show the trouble and doubt of their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God’s word ; *but it is against the true Christian liberty that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins, as it hath been heretofore used in the time of blindness and ignorance.*”

So much then for our standards of doctrine. Next I ask, who of our most honored and learned divines have taught it ?

Is it Bishop White ? Let us hear him :

ON THE ORDINATION SERVICE.—Memoirs of the Church.—p. 203. Philadelphia edit. 1820.

“ The alterations in the Ordinal were prepared by the Bishops. There was no material difference of opinion, except in regard to the words used by the Bishop at the ordination of Priests—‘ Receive ye the Holy Ghost,’ and ‘ whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.’ Bishop Seabury, who alone was tenacious of this form, consented at last, with great reluctance, to allow the alternative as it now stands. The objections to the use made of the aforesaid expressions (the author here speaks his own sense only, not answering for that of any other Bishop) were as follow :

“ As to the first ; ‘ Receive ye the Holy Ghost,’ it is supposed to express the conveyance of the ministerial character which St. Paul recognises as the gift of the Spirit. 1 Tim. 4 : 14, and 2 Tim. 1 : 6 ; and Eph. 4 : 8, 11. And as to the expressions, ‘ whose sins,’ &c., he (i. e. the Bishop) supposes it to relate, according to the intention of the service, principally, under due regulation, to the power of passing ecclesiastical censures, and of releasing from them ; and partly

to the declaring of the forgiveness of sins, repented of and forsaken; such forgiveness not to apply, independently on the sincerity of the receiver. But although each of the expressions will thus admit of a good interpretation, which should be given by the clergy as occasion may call for it; yet the words are not necessarily to be used in preference to every other form, in the very act of conveying the ministerial commission. If they are not necessary, they cannot be so proper in the place in which they stand as some other words of more obvious signification. There seems the less reason to stickle for the last of the two clauses, as it was not of very early use in the Church."

ON FORGIVENESS OF SINS.—Lectures on the Catechism. Philadelphia. 1813.—p. 43.

"The design of these Lectures requires, that there should be pointed out where, and on what grounds, our Church differs from the Church of Rome, on the present subject. That Church exacts, as the condition of the forgiveness of sin, confession to a priest. We find no authority for this in Scripture. The passage on which the Council of Trent has principally rested this matter is (John 20: 23,) 'whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.' Here it is said is a power of loosing and binding; and it cannot be exercised without a special knowledge of the sins which are the objects of the power. The error is partly grounded on the not distinguishing between the sinner and the sin. It is not said, *whatsoever sins*, but *whose soever sins* ye remit. There may be satisfactory evidence of penitence, even where there is not a minute disclosure of all the delinquencies to which it has a relation. Further, if we were to admit the passage in proof of the priestly power, it would not follow that the penitent is under an obligation to resort to it. He might still, for any thing that appears, repair to the original source of pardon; as in the case of a rebellious subject, who should have immediate recourse to his prince, instead of applying to another person under a commission. But it is conceived, that the passage principally relates to the binding under ecclesiastical censures, and to the releasing from them. When these acts take place in the due administration of ecclesiastical discipline, the Great Master ratifies what is

done in His name, and by virtue of his authority. But even in this line, what may be the effect of error or of passion, must be foreign to every fair construction of the text; and much less can we conceive of the Searcher of hearts, as admitting to a share in the exercise of His prerogative a succession of frail and in some instances, sinful men, who cannot of themselves look beyond the conduct; who may be imposed on not only by an imperfect or by a false confession; but even where no deception is intended, and in consequence of men's imperfect knowledge of their own hearts. By writers on the present subject, there are cited other passages of Scripture, which speak of the confession of sins. But in no one of them is there an injunction to confess to a minister, authorized to apply the grant of pardon in any other way than in that of release from ecclesiastical censure.

Is it Bishop Griswold? Hear him:

OF AURICULAR CONFESSION.—Work on the Reformation. Boston. 1843.—p. 67.

“The next Article which I would mention, is what is called Auricular Confession. The Roman Church makes it imperative on all her members to confess their sins to a priest,—a practice which, like most of their other distinctive principles, adds very much to the power and wealth of their priesthood. It is not only fitting, but the duty of Christians, to *confess their sins one to another*—especially to those whom they have injured, that they may make restitution and obtain forgiveness; and also to confess such faults and offences as others have a right to know. But there are many secrets which, though they may be connected with what in God's sight is sinful, had better not be known to man. And that laymen are bound to confess to priests, any more than priests to laymen, no good reason, nor divine authority, can be given.”

Again:—

“That men should be willing that such questions should be put to their wives, and sisters, and young daughters in the confessional, as are found even in the published rules of that Church, has seemed to me strange and astonishing. One who had been educated among the Papists, says, ‘I learned (in the confessional) more sins than ever I had heard

of when conversant in the world.' What effect many of the questions which are known to be put to females must have on the priests themselves, may easily be imagined. That the people of this our free country should have such awakened suspicions and fears of the private meetings of the people called Freemasons, who are *men* only, and ~~they~~ respectable members of society, mingling with the community in all the affairs of life, and yet manifest such apathy respecting the secret of the confessional, and of men and women wholly retired from the view of the world, has long to me seemed unaccountable."

Is it Bishop Hobart? Hear him in his charge of 1819:

"THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHURCHMAN STATED AND EXPLAINED, IN DISTINCTION FROM THE CORRUPTIONS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME," &c.—p. 25.

"The Churchman only considers a general absolution as an edifying and consolatory part of the public service. The Church of Rome makes auricular confession—the private confession to the priest, by every individual, of all his sins of thought, word, and deed—an indispensable condition of forgiveness. *The Churchman justly deems auricular confession, and private absolution, an encroachment on the rights of conscience—an invasion of the prerogative of the Searcher of hearts—and, with some exceptions, hostile to domestic and social happiness, and licentious and corrupting in its tendency.*"

Is it Bishop Ravenscroft? Bishop Ravenscroft! I am very sure, my dear friend, that to you and me, and many others of our friends, (some of them now among the oldest and most honored of the clergy of North Carolina,) it is quite needless to produce evidence that neither auricular confession, nor any other peculiar dogma of Rome, formed any part of the faith of our good old father. For myself, I care not who makes the assertion that Bishop Ravenscroft directly or indirectly countenanced auricular confession; *on my own personal knowledge*, I pronounce the assertion to

be incorrect. Let me bear my testimony. That good old man, who was instant in-season and out of season in teaching us Christ's truth while he lived, has gone to God. He is not here to answer for himself. He left behind him nothing save the precious memory of his piety, his zeal, his love for the Saviour, his emphatically *Protestant* principles, and his manifold labors for Christ and his Church. Be it ours to guard the precious legacy. It belongs more particularly to that part of the vineyard in which he toiled. Those who knew Bishop Ravenscroft, as we knew him, must not, without a word, permit him, now that he is in his grave, to be, I will not say calumniated, but misrepresented by those who knew him not.

As you are aware, few were better acquainted with his theological views than I was. He directed my own studies. There were but few points in theology on which I did not hear him express his opinion; for you doubtless well remember the fearless and manly frankness with which he was accustomed to speak his thoughts unreservedly on all doctrinal points. I know, therefore, from his own lips, what he thought of Rome's corruptions. I owe it to truth and his memory to say that particularly were *papal supremacy*, *transubstantiation*, and *auricular confession*, unqualifiedly condemned by him. The immoral tendency of the latter was a theme on which especially he was just the man to speak with great earnestness and force, in strong and decided terms of condemnation.

Most true it is that he had a deep sense of the importance and dignity of the Christian ministry, as a part indis-

pensable of that Church of which Christ is the head. But it was no *personal* importance or dignity that he saw in it; it was official, and to be valued because it was a part of Christ's system, intended for the *comfort* of men; not to be perverted into a device for trampling on the uninformed, and bringing them into subjection to an odious tyranny, by obtaining the knowledge of their most secret thoughts and actions, under the pretence of saving them from damnation. He knew no such occupation, nor deemed this any part of his calling to the performance of holy functions; as his whole ministerial life will attest. And yet he both knew and exercised his powers and duties in the, to him, painful application of discipline. In short, he looked on the priesthood as a *ministry*, not a *magistry*, in the literal sense of those terms.

But when he came to speak of *repentance*, he treated it not as a matter between man and a priest, but as a far more solemn transaction between man and his God. He made its foundation to consist of self-aborrence and self-loathing on account of spiritual impurity, clearly discerned and felt by the sinner. He made that impurity a load on the soul so weighty that the sinner was obliged by his very agony of conscience to seek alleviation; and he taught him to seek pardon and forgiveness directly of God, through the precious blood of Christ, and through nothing else. He taught him that he must abandon sin, *all* sin. Richard Cecil has said that no man can preach effectually beyond his own spiritual experience. Our good old father in this matter did preach his own experience; for I have heard him, with the tears streaming

down his cheeks, tell the story of his own sense of sin, his remorse of conscience, when God in his mercy opened his eyes to the perception of his true condition. He went to no priest; he sought his own chamber, and no being was with him there but God; no book did he have there but the Bible; he read, he prayed, he bowed in broken-hearted contrition, he cried to God, imploring that mercy might be shown him for Christ's sake. He thus, and thus only, found mercy and pardon. Bishop Ravenscroft teach auricular confession! He would as soon have thought of selling indulgences to sin; or of performing masses to release departed souls from the torments of purgatorial fire.

And as to repentance for sins *after baptism*, he never thought of the intervention of the priest to absolve them. Have I not seen him when, in the interior of the State, necessity compelled us to seek the shelter, at night, of some humble log habitation, and to share the same apartment, nay, sometimes the same bed; have I not seen his devotions, heard his groans, looked on his tears, listened to his sorrowful self-reproaches for his early life of worldliness and sin, and watched him as it were wrestling in prayer with God, humble as a little child? Yes, verily; and I can truly say that never saw I any man, the intensity of whose self-abasement, penitency, and fervency in devotion, appeared to me like that of Bishop Ravenscroft. I used to think that he felt as Augustine must have done when he wrote his "Confessions." Oh no, my friend, you may tell the theological tyros of this day, that the good old man believed in whispered confession to a priest, and that the priest had, there-

upon, power to forgive sins ; you may labor to pervert his words, and mystify his meaning to prove your assertion, and you may gull their too easy credulity ; but you will never make the old Churchmen of North Carolina, who knew *him*, believe what *they know* to be a falsehood so gross and preposterous.

We come now to our next source of information in determining what the Protestant Episcopal Church believes on the subject of auricular confession. What has been her *practice* ?

If she really holds to the view of Rome, then are we constrained to admit that all our earlier bishops, with the venerable Bishop White at their head, must either have been very hypocritical and wicked men, or else exceedingly ignorant ; for no fact is more notorious than that from our organization as a Church, almost up to this hour, such a practice as that of habitual secret confession of sins to a priest, and absolution thereupon, never obtained among us. And yet during all this time, not a bishop of them all ever raised his voice to remonstrate against the wilful disregard by the whole Church, clerical and lay, of a duty, the performance of which, as we have been told of late, offers the *only* mode of remission of sin *after baptism* !

For sixty long years those who were set over our fathers and ourselves in the Lord, have suffered those fathers to go down to the grave without seeking remission of their sins ; nay, have themselves gone into eternity unshriven ; have, in our own days, let us, in our tears, lay our own holy dead in the sepulchre, in the humble, but, as they

knew, unfounded hope of finding them again in the resurrection of the just; and yet, while life still lingered, ere the flickering taper was quite extinguished,—while with a sense of feeling sharpened, by our agony, to exquisiteness, our fingers sought to find a fast failing pulse, and in our suppressed breathing we stood by the bedside of our dying; have, even amid this agony of years crowded into hours, have suffered our loved ones to be

“Cut off even in the blossoms of their sin,
 Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,
 No reckoning made; but sent to their account,
 With all their imperfections on their head.”

They never whispered to us the duty of confession, never told us of the efficacy of priestly absolution. They buried our dead out of our sight, and knew that they had left them to—damnation!

Now who will dare thus to asperse the holy men who have graced the prelacy of our Church? Those, whoever they may be, that dare to assert that private confession of sins to a priest, and priestly absolution, are held by the Protestant Episcopal Church to be indispensable to the remission of post-baptismal sins.

But in these latter days, a whisper is borne to our ears that there be those who have found a better and a brighter light whereby to read our doctrines truly, than was possessed by our departed fathers of the Church. The men who framed our expositions of doctrine, we are gravely

given to understand, were not hypocritical, but they were *ignorant!* It is an insult to their memories to defend them from the imputation. And from whom comes the charge of ignorance? It surely should be from some one whose claims to learning have been attested by his laborious productions: from some one who has made his own mark among scholars; it cannot certainly be from men whose intellects would be enriched by the very leavings of the learning of those, whom they, with *ex cathedra* air, so flip-pantly pronounce to have been *ignorant*.

But let it come from what quarter it may, it needs something more than bold assertion to convict of ignorance, before the Church, such men as White and Smith and Wharton (to say nothing of the other members of the Convention of 1789).

The *practice* of the Church, therefore, condemns the doctrine of auricular confession.

We come now to the fourth and last ground on which to test the question.

What is the language of the *enemies* of the Church on the subject?

And here I must preface my quotations with a few explanatory words.

It so happened that in the year 1813, on a criminal trial in New-York, a clergyman of the Church of Rome was called as a witness, and declined to state what he knew, because it had been communicated to him in the confessional. A long argument was made by counsel for and against his right to refuse to testify. The priest was sus-

tained in his refusal. The report of the speech in support of the refusal of the witness was triumphantly published by some member of the Church of Rome, with a long Appendix, consisting of an elaborate exposition and defence of auricular confession. In that defence he undertakes to show, by precisely such arguments as we have lately seen answered by your distinguished senator, that the Church of England teaches auricular confession and absolution: and he thus proceeds to comment on our Prayer Book:

“But it will not be improper here to take notice that the Book of Common Prayer, published by and with the approbation of the bishops, clergy, and laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America in Convention, and which has generally been adopted by said Church since the 1st day of October, in the year of our Lord 1790, does not contain in the exhortation before the communion,” &c. He then proceeds to point out the differences between our Book and that of the English Church, in the communion service, and in the “visitation of the sick.” He then speculates on the causes of the change, indulging in a strain of irony, and in one place using these words:

——— “have always led me to believe that they [our clergy] considered themselves as ministers empowered by Christ to absolve (not to *declare* them to be absolved, as their present revised Book of Common Prayer says),” &c.; and after suggesting several causes, he thus proceeds:

“Be this, however, as it may, I do not think they [meaning Protestant Episcopalians], *at least* no more than the Lutherans, can with any propriety charge that, with

being a *licentious practice*, namely, *confession with the use of absolution*, which they themselves once followed as well as we, which they have so very recently left off, and which their own acknowledged mother Church, the Church in England, holds with to this present day.”*

Here, then, we have a Romanist stating that *from our own Prayer Book* he understands us as rejecting confession and absolution, and not practising it. And he understands it precisely as it was meant he should, and as all well informed Romanists in this country understand it. There is not one of them who would take such confession and declaration of absolution as is prescribed in any part of our Book, and substitute it as an equivalent for his doctrine and practice of auricular confession, and sacrament of penance.

One more letter I hope will dispose of the residue of the subject.

* The Catholic Question in America. Appendix xciii—xciv. New-York (printed by Gillespie). 1813.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

The next point which, as you will remember, I proposed to examine, is this: How far have recent teachings in North Carolina approached to the doctrines of the Church of Rome?

It is a question of delicacy, because most of the teachings alluded to are published under the name of the Bishop of the diocese. I approach it, therefore, with some reluctance, which yields only to my friendship for you, and to a sense of duty. I have respect for the office of a bishop; it was part of my Christian training to respect it. In what I have to say, therefore, I must beg of you to understand that I speak not of the Bishop *personally*; I am concerned only with the *doctrines* that have been published under his name. If these, in my poor judgment, be not the doctrines of the Church, then however much I may regret the necessity which forces me to it, I must, as an honest man, abide by the teaching of the Church, and not by that of the Bishop. I think I know myself well enough to promise that I will not forget the courtesy that becomes a

Christian man when he is controverting what he deems erroneous *opinions* ; controversy with *persons*, God be thanked, I have none.

And I have thought that in this part of my task, it would both relieve *you*, and lessen *my* labor, should I present the matter in a tabular view, and leave you to draw your own inference. Let us then place side by side what Rome teaches, what the Church teaches, and what is taught in the publications of the Bishop of North Carolina.

Rome teaches.

1. That sins are to be distinguished into *mortal* and *venial* : and that for the latter a man cannot be lost or damned.

2. That auricular confession of sin is a *sacrament* instituted by divine command.

The Church teaches.

1. No such distinction : but that *all* sin deserves God's condemnation : and that " the offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for *all* the sins of the whole world, both original and actual ; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone.—*Art. xxxi.*

2. " There are *two* sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord. Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to

The Bishop teaches.

1. It is " as true now as ever that man sinning *mortally*, or so as to hazard his spiritual life after baptism," &c.—*Pastoral Letter on " The Priestly Office,"* p. 12.

" Besides, as all *mortal* sin, whether known to men or not, cuts us off from Christ," &c.—*Sermon on " Self-examination,"* p. 114.

The word "*mortal*," must here be used as distinctive, or it is unmeaning : and when applied to sin, cannot possibly have any correlative but "*venial*" or pardonable.

2. " On this doctrine of *priestly absolution*, the great battle of Christ's authority in the church is to be fought. FOR IN REFERENCE TO THIS, it is to be determined whether

Rome teaches.

3. That this confession *must* be made *secretly* to a priest.

The Church teaches.

say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown, partly of the corrupt following of the apostles, partly are states of life allowed by the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God."—*Article xxv.*

"How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his church?"

"*Ans.* Two only, as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord."—*Catechism.*

3. That ordinarily, confession is to be made generally in public worship.

That it *may* be made *privately* to either priest or layman, in accordance with the early usage of the church, for relief of a troubled conscience, for counsel or instruction: and that in all such cases it is done *voluntarily*, and a party sins not who declines to make it.

The Bishop teaches.

the *sacramental system* of the Gospel, or its antagonist, *Lutheranism*, is to prevail with us."—*Pastoral Letter on Salisbury Convention*, p. 25.

If the writer does not deem priestly absolution a *sacrament*, this sentence means nothing.

3. "While therefore, *private confession* is not regarded by our branch of the one Catholic church, 'as generally necessary to salvation,' and hence, as in the primitive church, is left to the *voluntary* action of individuals under *contrition*, moving them thereto; yet as priestly *absolution* from all *deadly* sins after baptism, is regarded necessary, it becomes a question for each one to determine, how far the effects of such absolution may or may not depend upon

Rome teaches.

4. Such private confession must include a *particular* enumeration of all sins of all sorts.

The Church teaches.

4. That he who would come to the holy communion, and by self-examination, prayer, self-judgment, &c., cannot "quiet his own conscience," so as to remove "all scruples and doubtfulness" from his own mind about coming to the communion, had better, not *must*, apply to some minister of God's word, and "open his grief" or trouble *about coming to the communion*, (not about all his sins, confessing them one by one,) and get "godly counsel and advice," on

The Bishop teaches.

this kind of confession.

"What the church has not enjoined as necessary, may *become so*, however, by the moral state of individuals. What is not imposed as a *condition*, may be, in certain cases required as *means*."—*Pastoral on Salisb. Conv.*, p. 51.

Put as a syllogism it will stand thus:

Priestly absolution of all mortal, post-baptismal sins, is *necessary to salvation*.

But such absolution cannot be had, save on *private confession* to a *priest*.

Ergo—as a *condition*, or at least a *means, necessary to salvation*, private confession *must* be made to a priest.

4. "To insure the effect of *absolution*, this confession, 1. Must embrace sin that separates the soul from communion with Christ. 2. Again, our confession must have in it both the number and right conception of sins in order to bring the soul into a state of remission.—

Would they [baptized but ungodly persons] be able under such circumstances to '*take their weight, ONE BY ONE—examine the catalogue of their sins severally?*' But *this must be done*.
—Further, *absolution*

Rome teaches.

The Church teaches.

The Bishop teaches.

the subject of approaching the Lord's table.

So too, a prisoner condemned is told to make a "particular confession" only of that *one* sin for which he is condemned.

5. That the priest has power, as God's vicergerent, to absolve and forgive sins.

5. That remission of sins is to be ascribed to God alone, and proceeds from Him upon our repentance and faith. "He [God] pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel."—*Declaration of Absolution.*

6. That the priest, in absolution, acts *judicially*, and not *ministerially*.

6. That the priest is no judge, but ministerially declares God's absolution of the penitent. It is an authoritative assurance of the

looks to the *cure of sin* as well as its remission.

—But how can this benefit be secured in the *present* state of confession? How can the physician prescribe in wisdom and *honesty*, without knowing the disease?"—*Pastoral on Salisb. Conv.* pp. 51, 52, 53.

5. "Then, and not till then, will they [the people] discover the depth of their guilt as unfaithful members of Christ's body—discover how helpless and hopeless is their condition as neglecters of the grace of baptism, and violators of baptismal vows, without the extraordinary mercy which God has provided for them through 'the ministry of reconciliation'—perceive the dreadful hazard of that *presumption* which leads such neglecters and violators to trust for pardon to a *vague and general repentance*, a REPENTANCE NOT ACCEPTED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF CHRIST, who ALONE have charge of the discipline of his church, or THE POWER TO REMIT OR RETAIN SINS."—*Pastoral on Priestly Office*, p. 24.

6. "But, dependent as we are upon Christ, there is an instituted way, instituted by Himself, to his favor. That instrumentality is his

Rome teaches.

7. That in this judgment the priest is infallibly directed by the Holy Ghost.

The Church teaches.

pardon of God to all who have truly complied with God's conditions of pardon.

7. That as there is no judicial character in the priest, he neither needs nor has infallible direction.

The Bishop teaches.

priesthood, to which St. Paul saith, 'committed the power of reconciliation happens some deaths of which we find ourselves guilty, murdered the truth bound us to Christ in what way are we to be reconciled? we have a right to return to be reconciled on our own terms and on our own pleasure, less of the judgment of that priesthood, less of the authority having in trust the ministry of this reconciliation?' criminal to be made a judge in his own case. The merits of Christ alone can avail as a ground of our petition to Him, but are these merits applied now through that judgment, intercession, and absolution, authorized and made effectual by his express commission, 'whosesoever ye remit,' &c.—on *Self-examination* pp. 112, 113.

7. —"it is the judgment, however authorized, which alone Christ has authorized to go as far as a human judgment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can guard the reprobate sinner," &c.—on *Self Examination* p. 114, note.

Rome teaches.

8. That auricular confession was always the doctrine and usage of the Church of Christ.

9. That auricular confession is *essential to salvation.*

The Church teaches.

8. That penance (including, of course, auricular confession) is not to be counted a sacrament of the Gospel, having been the growth of corruption and abuse of a confession very different from auricular.—*See Article xxv.*

9. That nothing is *essential* to salvation, but true repentance, sincere faith in Christ, and humble obedience to his commands. "Holy Scripture doth set out to us, only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved."—*Article xviii.*

The Bishop teaches.

This is strange. How can a human judgment, brought by Christ himself, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, for the accomplishment of a special object, *fail* in its perfect, heaven-directed accomplishment? Is there a fallible infallibility?

8. "We speak against confession, *penance*, fasting, frequent communions, and the like. But could we know by experience their real bearing as instruments upon the salvation of the soul, I doubt not a horrible dread would come over us for our own peril in decrying them. We take upon ourselves a terrible responsibility in rejecting *that* as a remedy for sin, which *the experience of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church has ever sanctioned.*"—Sermon, "*Obedience the way to Knowledge,*" pp. 150, 151, of "The Obedience of Faith."

9. "Well may she [the Church] encourage us by the hope of *absolution* to seek aid in this momentous work [repentance] from the ministers of God's word! O let us not, dear brethren, from fear of reproach or suffering despise and cast away the holiest privileges of our birthright—the privile-

Rome teaches.

10. That auricular confession is necessary to be made, to obtain remission of sins after baptism.

11. That Christ is really and actually present, in body and blood, in the sacrament.

The Church teaches.

10. No such distinction of ante and post-baptismal sins, but that "cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

11. That in whatever sense our Lord meant, when He said, "this is my body, and this is my blood;" in that sense, the bread and wine are his body and blood in the blessed sacrament: but that we have no revelation enabling us to say how they

The Bishop teaches.

ges great, and in some cases at least indispensable of that priestly judgment and counsel and guidance provided and ordained for us in the Church of the living God!" Sermon—"The case of the baptized without self-discipline," p. 88 of "The Obedience of Faith."

10. Sins may be committed after baptism—committed against the vows of the holy covenant made to God, as represented by his ministers. Hence, they were intrusted with power to remit, upon repentance, such sins, and restore the offenders to the forfeited blessings of their baptismal state.—It is "as true now as ever, that man sinning mortally, or so as to hazard his spiritual life after baptism, stands in need of absolution from that priesthood, to whom Christ said, "whose soever sins ye remit," &c.—*Pastoral on "Priestly Office,"* pp. 12, 16.

11. Duties of the orders of the Holy Cross, at Valle Crucis:—"to inculcate upon the minds of all within their influence, the sacramental system of the church, particularly Baptismal regeneration, the real presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist,

Rome teaches.

The Church teaches.

The Bishop teaches.

are His body and blood. That the Romish doctrine of the "real presence" by transubstantiation, (or the change of the substance of bread and wine) in the supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.—*Article xxviii.*

and sacerdotal absolution.—*Pastoral on Salzburg. Conv.*, p. 69.

As I cannot suppose the Bishop would stoop to a quibble on the word *real*, I have thought he used the words in their ordinary acceptation as equivalent to "transubstantiation" in the Romish sense. Perhaps, however, he does not mean them to be so understood.

12. Prayers to be made to the Virgin Mary.

12. Prayers to be made to God only.

12. "Some expressions in a little manual at Valle Crucis, were objected to, but as they were promptly altered by the Bishop," &c.—*Pastoral*, p. 24, note.

These expressions are said, (Examination of the Pastoral, pp. 68, 69,) to have been prayers to the Virgin Mary, and Saints. And the Bishop is represented as saying in a letter to one of his presbyters: "I feel bound, however, to say, that while I allow no prayers to the Virgin Mary or to Saints, not because they are *wrong in themselves*, but because they are *liable to abuse*, I do still retain," &c.

I submit to you these comparative views without remark. You are as competent as I am to deduce a conclusion.

If to you, the Bishop's teaching shall seem to conflict with

that of the Church, you will at least join with me in commending the plainness with which he has avowed his opinions. For that he deserves respect. Nor is it right to question his motives. Hear his own words: "He may have misjudged; (for who does not sometimes err?) but he claims to have acted with a good conscience both towards God and man." And again, thinking that an inadequate perception of the value and nature of the sacraments was leading to ruinous consequences he says, "the thought furnished (as your bishop hopes for mercy at last) the only motive in the preparation and publication of his *seven sermons* on the 'Obedience of Faith,' and his *Pastoral* on 'the priestly office.' In doing which he boldly avers that he has gone beyond no doctrine of the Church," &c. Now no man has a right to question these statements as to motives. But from the last remark, it is obvious, I think, that the Bishop does not admit that others who differ from him hold the doctrines of the Church *truly*. Hence the question arises, *Who shall settle what that doctrine is?* And this naturally brings me to the consideration of the last point I proposed to consider, viz.: How far are certain claims, made by the Bishop to Episcopal rights and prerogatives, consistent with our constitution and canons?

The Bishop's position, if I understand him aright, is this: that "no resolution [can] be passed in [a diocesan] Convention, implying its right either directly or indirectly to affirm what [the Convention] as a diocese, holds in regard to doctrine, discipline, or worship; or what, in respect to these points, the clergy are bound to teach." (*Pastoral on Salisb. Conv.*, p. 6.)

That in being consecrated, by the Church at large, over the diocese, he was thereby made by the Church "*alone responsible*" to her, for the "doctrine, discipline, and worship" of her children in North Carolina; and that to enable him to meet this responsibility, the Church has endowed him as she has endowed no other man or body of men in North Carolina. She has given him *a special gift of the Holy Ghost, for his office.* (*Pastor on Salisb. Conv.*, pp. 19, 20.)

Now several deductions may be made from this view of the Bishop's opinions; some of them are undoubtedly correct, while others are as plainly incorrect. The pervading error of the Bishop's argument in support of his views, it appears to me has been accurately pointed out in the pamphlet attributed to your honorable Senator. It consists in not properly discriminating between *ministerial powers* under the existing and undisputed law of the Church, and a *legislative power* over the law of the Church. As to this last (whether it were originally right or wrong to place it where it is placed, has nothing to do with the question) as to the last it now indisputably belongs to the inferior clergy and laity, as a co-ordinate legislative branch, under our constitution, and reaches too, by express declaration, to the several particulars of "doctrine, discipline and worship;" and I remember to have heard Bishop White say, that any attempt to exclude the inferior clergy and laity from the legislative power would have prevented any ecclesiastical organization at all.

Now the first inference from the position of the Bishop of North Carolina is, that the inferior clergy and laymen sitting in Convention, cannot, as representing the diocese, say

aught as to what *is* the doctrine, discipline or worship of the Church. Had he said merely that they could not *change* either, under our ecclesiastical system, he would have been perfectly correct; but it by no means follows, that because they are interdicted from change (except as the diocese acts by its representation in the *General* Convention), that therefore they may not understand perfectly, and have and express an opinion too, as to what the existing doctrine is. They violate no courtesy and infringe on no right of the Bishop by so doing; for they did not receive the doctrines of the Church *from him*. Nay, he and they alike received them from a common *superior*, the Church at large. It will not do then to say that clergymen below bishops and laymen cannot meddle with doctrine, even so far as to say *what it is*; because our Church did expressly permit, 1st, both clergy and laity to agree to, and to assist in setting forth and declaring what she would hold as to doctrine, discipline and worship; and 2d, does *now* permit them both, by express grant, to have a voice in any proposed change of them. A second point to be deduced from the Bishop's view, (though by no means a *consequence* from *his* premises,) is nevertheless true; viz. that the Convention as such shall not *dictate to the clergy* either the subjects or substance of their public preaching; but the laity have an undoubted right to have an opinion both as to the truth of their clergyman's preaching and as to the propriety of his practices; and more than that, the Church in North Carolina not only recognizes that right, but actually impliedly creates a *duty* from its possession. Thus, suppose a rector in North Carolina should habitually refuse to read in morning prayer

the opening supplications in the litany ; and from his pulpit should openly state that he did not believe our blessed Lord to be divine ; this would touch *doctrine*.

Again, suppose he had two communicants^d at variance, one rich and influential, and the other poor ; and that he should, without remark or inquiry, admit the rich one to the Lord's table, and refuse to let the poor man come, though he had expressed his sorrow for the variance, begged pardon for all wherein he had done wrong, expressed his earnest desire to be reconciled to and live in love with his former enemy, and prayed that he might come to the heavenly feast : this would touch *discipline*.

Once more, suppose that he should habitually mix up his own extempore prayers with the prescribed morning or evening service, and at the communion should ostentatiously mix water with the wine ; or, instead of putting the consecrated bread into the hand of the communicant, should extend him the paten, and irreverently bid him help himself : this would touch *worship*.

Now what may the laity of such a rector do ? May not the *vestrymen* of that church in North Carolina present him to the Bishop, and prefer charges for any one, or all of these things ? Have you repealed the very first canon that was ever adopted in your diocese, expressly authorizing the *vestries* to present clergymen for any misbehavior inconsistent with their calling and duties ?

And what would be their charges which by the same canon they are bound distinctly to specify ? Would they not be that he taught false *doctrine*, not of the Church ;

unjustly and oppressively administered *discipline* ; and irreverently and irregularly conducted *worship* ? And must they not exercise their understandings, and have a settled creed in their own minds, to distinguish false doctrine from true ? And if they are not to think for themselves, can they distinguish between righteous and oppressive discipline ? And if they may not learn from their Prayer Books how the worship is *ordered*, can they say it is irregular or irreverent ?

But more than this ; the Church recognizes the right of the clergy and laity, sitting in Convention, to have an opinion about doctrine ; aye, and express it too, in a case where that opinion may affect one higher in position than a mere *rector*. I know not how your law is, but I know that in many of the dioceses, a Convention (including inferior clergy and laymen) may *present a bishop*, may prefer charges against him for *teaching unsound doctrine* ; that is, such as is inconsistent with the doctrine taught in her standards by the Church herself, to her children of both clergy and laity.

For it will not do to say that the Church has not taught the laity as well as the clergy ; that she does not mean them either to think upon, or understand God's truth for themselves. Look to the *Catechism* ; look to the language of the laity in *confirmation*, implying that they understand baptism ; look to the people's responses in the daily morning and evening prayer ; nay, look to the very name of the book containing our formularies for worship—it is **COMMON** prayer ; common, blessed be God, alike to ministers and

people. Now, who will pretend that the Church does not intend and expect the people to exercise their understandings; to think, to learn, to know from the Church herself, speaking through that sublime Book of our devotions, the truth of the ever living God, as revealed in our adorable Saviour? And *once* knowing, understanding, and receiving it, so as intelligently to use their knowledge when they join in her holy offices, where has the Church said, that they become suddenly oblivious of the same blessed truths when they hear aught that contradicts them? The people, once taught the truth, and taught to love it, cannot be thus made to forget it upon the *ipse dixit* of any one. It is no part of the design of the Church that they should ever forget it.

I have already said that under our constitution, the Convention of the diocese can make no *change* in our doctrine, discipline, or worship. Let me now add that *the Bishop has no more right to make a change than the Conrention*. Neither party has it. *It belongs to the General Convention alone*. If one may not touch the subject, so neither may the other; if one may not pervert the truth of doctrine by his private interpretation, so no more can the other, for the doctrine of our branch of the Church is, in the first instance, of *public* interpretation only. All that either bishops, priests, deacons, or laymen have to do, is alike to receive it. And if doubt arise as to what it truly is, not one has power authoritatively to settle that doubt. Why? Because *in our Church, at least, all have agreed that it shall be settled in another way*. Either by the voice of the General Convention where all sit, and where alone doctrines can be touched,

For the doctrine he teaches is *assumed* that because he is a monarch and sheltering himself behind the Holy Spirit, say to those who are right, and that in thinking of sin against God, and *must* be his special gift authorizes him on that issue. The result of such a bishop, he alone must be held as a special gift of the Holy Spirit in opposition it, he

think that such must be *she is responsible*; and she says that "she gives responsibility," and that she takes responsibility from the laity. In short, she "precludes" responsibility involving these

errors.

But I ever met with, she acts no responsibility, but it strikes me as authority, in the according to her or one. She is of responsibility the ex-



and the same is the case with the members of the
 Church, who are considered as being commissioned, lawfully
 appointed, to preserve the doctrine. This is not always
 strictly true. We may do more.

But I think the Roman will reply that he has a special
 gift of the Holy Ghost for the office of a Bishop in the
 Church of God. For he is from the Holy Trinity, to under-
 stand the secret effect of a Bishop, or treat it otherwise than
 with respectful reverence. I believe that he who is rightly
 ordained, and who receives the gift of the Holy Ghost for
 the proper performance of his holy and peculiar functions,
 I believe that it is on that account his acts are valid and
 authoritative, and receive spiritual powers and benefits, when
 exercised within the limits of his ministerial functions.
 But was that? Is infallibility, either of judgment or act,
 necessarily within these limits? The Bishop himself has
 said it is not. He himself has written, "he may have
 erred." But if he alone may decide what is doctrine,
 and if his charge and duty may not even entertain and express
 an opinion, or even if his view, can such a claim be sus-
 tained on any ground short of infallibility? I think not.

Now, for what is the Holy Ghost thus given? It
 is for a particular purpose: it is for the office of a Bishop.
 Now he may will proceed, against the experience of all his-
 tory, that a bishop may not become heretical; and equally
 certain is that a heretic is no part of a bishop's office.
 Why this of course, that the moment
 he ceases to be a bishop, he has not the Holy Ghost any
 more. When, therefore, the very ques-

tion at issue becomes whether the doctrine he teaches is true or heretical, he cannot *assume* that because he is a bishop, it is *necessarily* the former; and sheltering himself under the special gift of the blessed Spirit, say to those who differ from him that he *must* be right, and that in thinking otherwise than as he does, they sin against God, and *must* be wrong in their opinion, because his special gift authorizes *him alone* to determine the question at issue. The result of this argument is, that because he is a bishop, he alone must determine doctrine; and because he has a special gift of the Holy Ghost, even though he should act in opposition it, he cannot determine wrong.

But further, the Bishop seems to think that such must be the case, because, as he says, *he alone is responsible*; and he propounds as a maxim of the Church, that "she gives no authority where she exacts no responsibility," and that consequently, as she exacts no responsibility from the laity touching doctrine, discipline, and worship, she "precludes the judgment of the laity from all questions involving these things."

Now here it seems to me are several errors.

1. The Church has no such *maxim* that I ever met with, as that she gives no authority where she exacts no responsibility. It may be a very reasonable rule; but it strikes me that her rule is to put responsibility, not authority, in the first place, and then to say she holds us to *that* according to our means, whether they be ten talents, or five, or one. She has nowhere, that I know of, made the extent of responsibility the measure of authority; but she has made the extent of our means the measure of our responsibility.

But, 2. Suppose the rule were a maxim of the Church, as the Bishop states, then clearly the inferior clergy and laity would, both, have the power in Convention, which the Bishop denies to them; for we have seen that the Church has laid on them sometimes the *responsibility* of judging whether a bishop be sound in the faith, and the more painful duty of presenting him to his brother bishops for trial, if, in their judgment, he be not. And again, we have seen that by the canon of North Carolina, the laity alone, as a vestry, have the *responsibility* sometimes laid on them of presenting for trial, their doctrinally erroneous clergyman. The Church, therefore, on the Bishop's own ground, does not preclude the judgment of the laity from all questions involving doctrine, discipline, and worship.

3. The Bishop is not *alone responsible* in the sense that I suppose he *must* mean to give weight to his position. I am not sure that I rightly comprehend *how far* he extends his *sole* responsibility. For some things connected with the discharge of ministerial duty in North Carolina, he is alone responsible; for others he is not. Let us ask to *whom* and for *what*, he is responsible?

1. He is responsible to *God* for faithfully teaching, himself, the truth of Christ, and for using his authority, according to the law of "*this church*," to prevent any of his clergy from teaching, as Christ's truth, that which is not so.

2. He is responsible to his *fellow-men* of all orders in the Church, for faithfully holding and teaching in his own person; and for the lawful use of his proper canonical authority to enforce the teaching by the clergy under his

jurisdiction, of the truth of the Gospel, "*as this church hath received the same.*"

For these things he has a sole responsibility. But he certainly has no sole responsibility for the individual belief of every Churchman in North Carolina; all he can do is to preach the truth himself, and see that others under him preach it: and having faithfully done that, he will not be condemned for each one of his hearers who may refuse to receive it. This is his own teaching. In his sermon on "self-examination," he very truly says of every minister of Christ: "If his message be unheeded, the responsibility rests with the disobedient. Whatever may be the final and eternal result, the priest has delivered his own soul." (p. 115, of the "Obedience of Faith.")

But the Bishop speaks of his sole responsibility as if he were actually punishable for any want of orthodoxy in each individual of his diocese. On no other principle can he possibly claim, with any show of reason, the exclusive right to settle for the diocese what is orthodox. But he has no such right; for not he but the voice of the whole Church, expressed in a prescribed mode, is the sole standard of orthodoxy in all our dioceses. And as he makes his authority rest on his supposed responsibility, will it not follow that if his responsibility be *not* what he supposes, then the authority deduced from it is equally without foundation?

But there has been another exercise of authority on the part of the Bishop, in which he has (though I doubt not undesignedly) violated a fundamental principle of our ecclesiastical polity, and given a hard blow to the rights of our

respective diocesans within their jurisdictions. I allude to the formation of the order of "The Holy Cross," at Valle Crucis. If ecclesiastical history may be believed, monachism, amid some good, attributable less to the institution than to the circumstances of the times, has also done very much of evil. And Episcopalian, as I most conscientiously am, not the least of those evils to my mind has seemed to be its tendency, as manifested in many instances, to place ecclesiastics under the sole control of some prior of a monastery, or general of an order, with an express exemption of them from the jurisdiction of any bishop. Now, as I think every clergyman should be under Episcopal supervision and authority, I like not any thing that has the least tendency to break in on what I deem the ancient and Apostolic order and usage in this respect. Hence monachism is not viewed by me with favor; and it certainly has not been directed or sanctioned by the Church.

To the formation, therefore, of any religious order within our communion, bound by vows of poverty, celibacy, obedience, &c., to a superior, there are very serious objections. Let me give you a *fact* as related to me. I believe it to be true. A young gentleman was ordained a deacon in the diocese of —, where he was a candidate, and where he belonged. He was at the time of his ordination, though the fact was not then known, a member of the order of the "Holy Cross:" he had expressly, or impliedly, bound himself to some sort of obedience to the superior, as the facts I am about to relate will show. Soon after his ordination, and before he had canonically been removed from the diocese

by letter dimissory,—nay, as far as my informant knew, before he had asked a letter dimissory from his own diocesan, he received a letter from him, calling his attention to a vacant parish within his own diocese, and requesting of him to go to it, take the charge of it, and bestow on it his ministrations. To this letter from his own diocesan, the deacon answered that he could not comply with the request *until he had consulted the Bishop of North Carolina*. The bishop to whose diocese the deacon belonged was, as you may well suppose, somewhat perplexed to understand what mysterious connection had thus linked one of *his* deacons to a brother bishop; and the inquiry to which the circumstances led was among the first of those events which brought to the knowledge of the Church the existence of an order within it, bound by some kind of obligation, if not by express vows of obedience, to another superior than the one recognized in the ordination office.

I observe that in page 68 of his Pastoral, the Bishop states that certain young gentlemen offered him their services, and begged to come under his Episcopal guidance, “so soon as arrangements could be made for their transfer to my [his] diocese.” But I must infer from what follows that they then and there, without waiting for the transfer, became members of the order of the “Holy Cross.” Indeed one of the young gentlemen, I am credibly informed, was the very deacon just referred to.

But suppose all had been duly transferred before joining the order; let us then state one or two hypothetical cases, and see what is to become of the important principle of the

proper ecclesiastical subordination of our clergy to their respective bishops.

1. Suppose one of the order to be canonically transferred, by letter dimissory, from North Carolina to some other diocese ; and suppose further, that he does not choose to dissolve his connection with the order. What spirit of obedience does he carry into his new diocese ? The Church law, on the one hand, requires of him, and his ordination promises bind him, to reverently obey his bishop, who, according to the canons of the Church, may have the charge and government over him ; with a glad mind and will to follow his *godly* admonitions : while, on the other hand, his obligations to his order (obligations, by the way, to which all experience shows additions by little and little, will constantly be made) may require of him to teach "sacerdotal absolution," for instance, in a sense directly opposed to his own bishop's "godly admonitions." Here, then, is at once a divided allegiance. He must disobey his bishop, or disregard his vow to the superior of his order. What an endless source of trouble to our bishops in their respective dioceses might not a body of men thus committed easily create ; and under such circumstances, if, as your bishop supposes, each diocesan is solely and personally responsible for the orthodoxy of every Churchman in his diocese, I can only say, may Heaven have mercy on our poor bishops' souls ! Their lot, already no easy one, will thus become, beyond all dispute, by far the hardest in the Christian Church.

2. But again : suppose the superior dies, the fraternity

either dies with him, or elects a new superior. The first is not likely to happen, for, to minds of a peculiar temperament, there is a sort of fascination in monastic usages. If, then, they elect a new superior, he must be either a bishop or a priest. If the first, suppose their own diocesan should refuse to have any thing to do with the order, as, if wise, I think he would; are they to elect the bishop of some other diocese, who may sympathize with them, and thus set up a rival authority to the very Episcopate to which they owe allegiance and obedience? Or, if they do not this, are they to elect, as a head, a mere *presbyter*? Worse still! They are subverting the fixed principles of the Church on the subject of subordination in the ministry. No presbyter can rightfully have among us such a power to control his brother presbyter. He cannot be a lawfully recognized *quasi* bishop. No bishop can be thus pushed from his chair by a presbyter, without a gross violation of all ecclesiastical principle.

These may suffice to show you how the peace of the whole Church may be disturbed by the practical working out of mediæval fancies for monastic life, and its obligations. Therefore it is that, on the slightest approach to monachism among us, I would respectfully utter my feeble warning, and say to all Churchmen, *Obsta principiis*.

I have now, my dear friend, gone through what I proposed. Neither time nor space have allowed me to do much more than suggest hints to guide your own thoughts. The unhappy abandonment of the Church by some who have recently gone to Rome (unhappy for themselves I

mean) has, however, led me to think that perhaps that all-wise Being, whose high prerogative alone it is, to bring good out of evil, means to overrule events to the accomplishment of a very great good. You know that unhappy differences of opinion on points which, however important, may be considered as of minor moment, when compared with the great doctrinal features that divide us from Rome, have, alas! too much of late alienated brethren who once understood and loved each other. Now I am perfectly satisfied that the great mass of our communion, clerical and lay, have no sympathy with the abominations and corruptions of Rome; we are *Protestant* Episcopalians. May it not be, then, that when the evil of indulging Romish sympathies, or idly coquetting with Romish usages, is brought home to us, in its *practical* effects, as illustrated by open apostasy; or, what is still more base, by the lurking treason that lingers among us, only to inflict at last a deeper injury, by sowing silently the seeds of disaffection; may it not be, I say, 1st, that God would rebuke and humble us for our pride, and punish us for our dissensions; and 2d, that, mingling benevolence even with his chastisement, He would show us that there is a *common ground* on which (each one forgetting his minor points of difference) we may once more stand, shoulder to shoulder, as brethren, with a common hope, a common heart, and a common resolution, to uphold the faith received from our martyred fathers of the Reformation; to proclaim ourselves, with one voice, the uncompromising, the irreconcilable enemies of all and each of Rome's corruptions?

Ah, my dear friend, such a result as this would cause

the Church to stand forth in her beauty and her strength, "terrible as an army with banners." Traitors would not long dare to linger among us.*

I profess to be no prophet, but there are those among the wise and good who think that, in the signs of the times, they see the gathering tokens of one more contest for "the truth as it is in Jesus," against the accumulated mass of falsehood, blasphemy, lust and idolatry of the Church of Rome. The field of battle they apprehend is to be our own fair land. If they be right, I confess I would fain see our own dear Church foremost in the van when the battle comes. Rome curses no "heretics" with more cordial anathemas than she does the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States. Rome knows that if that Church be true to her principles, Popery has no more dangerous enemy. It may *now* suit her purposes to deck her face in smiles, and lavish her blandishments, and spread her allurements before our young, our imaginative, our weak, who are captivated by the "poetry of religion." She has too her sympathizing tone of condolence for the querimonious breathings of the self-tormented victim who is writhing under the agony of wounded pride, or groaning over the broken bubble of disappointed ambition. She may kiss our traitors,

* How forcibly does an old, strong-minded clergyman of the English Church describe these traitors: "He that propagates suspected doctrines, such as praying for the dead, auricular confession, and the like, whose sole tendency is the gain and power of the priest, what is he but a *κάνηλος*, a *negotiator* for his partisans abroad? What does he but sow the seeds of Popery in the very soil of the Reformation."—DR. BENTLEY'S WORKS, vol. iii. p. 261.

but she trusts them not. But under all this hypocrisy, is no love for us. I would then fain see the soldiers of little army inspecting their armor; perchance they need it ere long; I would fain see them, when they go on, acquit themselves like men; and when the time come, God grant that, in the name of CHRIST, they may blow of death to Romish superstition and error; for sure they will strike for God, for TRUTH, for CHRISTIAN LIBER

APPENDIX.

An aliquando interrogandi sunt conjugati in confessione, circa negationem debiti ?

R. Affirmativè : præsertim mulieres, quæ ex ignorantia, vel præ pudore peccatum istud quandoque reticent; verùm non ex abrupto, sed prudenter est interrogatio instituenda, v. g. an cum marito rixatæ sint, quæ hujusmodi rixarum causa num propter talem occasionem maritis debitum negarint; quòd si se deliquisse fateantur, castè interrogari debent, inquit Braunman, an nil secutum fuerit continentia conjugali contrarium, v. g. pollutio, &c.

IV. Hinc uxor se accusans in confessione, quod negaverit debitum, interrogetur, an maritus ex pleno rigore juris sui id petiverit; idque colligetur ex eo, quòd petiverit instanter, quod graviter fuerit offensus, quòd aversiones vel alia mala sint secuta, de quibus etiam se accusare debet, quia fuit eorum causa: contra si confiteatur rixas vel aversiones adversus maritum, interrogari potest: an debitum negaverit: ut dictum est numero præcedenti.—*Dens*, tom. 7, pp. 140–150.

Prudentes Confessarii solent et statuunt regulariter inquirere ab omnibus sponsis, utrùm occasione futuri matrimonii occurrerent cogitationes quædam inhonestæ? utrum permiserint oscula, et alias majores libertates ad invicem ex eo, quòd fortè putaverint jam sibi plura licere?

Cum verecundia soleat magis corripere sponsam, propterea solèmus priùs in confessione audire sponsum, ut sponsa postea confidentius exponat, quod novit jam esse notum Confessario.

Addunt aliqui, sponsum, qui prius confitetur, posse induci, ut dicat sponsæ, se peccatum illum apertè esse confessum. Post confessionem sponsæ id non licet ampliùs.—*Dens*, tom. 6, p. 240.

Should the authority of *Dens* be questioned, the following are from the Moral Theology of Alphonsus Liguori, who was canonized in the year 1839.

Non teneri confessarium interrogari conjugem de hoc se accusantem, an semen effusum sit, vel non, quia raro, ut aiunt, accidit semen effundi, et sic etiam ego plures audivi ab eis, qui apud me in confessione se accusabant præpostere coivisse. Eos vero qui coeunt stando, vel sedendo, vel mulierem incubem, puto esse in majori periculo semen effundendi.

An autem, si vir se retrahat post seminationem, sed ante seminationem mulieris, possit ipsa statim tactibus se excitare ut seminet?

But enough of this brothel-like beastliness.



